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HISTORICAL AND LITERARY

TOUR

OF

A FOREIGNER

IN

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

84683

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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SHACKELL AND ARROWSMITH, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET-STREET.

PREFACE.

ONE of my publishers, who takes pleasure in reading the proofs of the books he delivers, disapproves of my entitling mine a "Tour," &c. affirming that it bears more analogy to Madame de Staël's "Germany," than to the numerous "Tours" published yearly in France and Switzerland. He would have therefore preferred the substitution of "England and Scotland" for the title I have chosen. No one is more willing to acknowledge than myself, that it is a Bookseller's especial province to be *au fait* in the construction of titles,—an act of more utility than is usually supposed; but I was alive to the hazard of causing dangerous comparisons; I, therefore, adhered pertinaciously to my first opinion. I am, moreover, bound to confess, that in order to get the better of the timidity I felt in offering to the public my sketches of English literature, I

found it necessary to imagine myself in the act of addressing indulgent friends. This is the secret of the Epistolary form of the Work.

The reader will perceive I did not carry back with me from Great Britain the *Anglomania*, which has been objected against the respectable counsellor of the *Cour Royale*. I have endeavoured to see everything without prejudice, and not to put entire faith in those *Cicérones*, who uniformly persuade foreigners that any given monument under actual inspection, is one of the seven wonders of the world. It has been my desire more especially, to judge for myself, and not to rely upon hearsay, except supported by demonstration. I am not sanguine enough to suppose that I have by so doing in all cases avoided being deceived; but I can affirm that my errors are never errors of bad faith; and I shall always be willing, on proper explanation, to retract my statements. I feel myself also called upon to state, that as to what regards the moral physiognomy of English Society, such as I have attempted to sketch it, my remarks apply to the period of my visit, which was paid to Great Britain under the Viziership of Lord Castlereagh, whose fatal influence pro-

longed its duration for some time under the administration of Mr. Canning. There was at that period, a marked contrast between the general politics of England, and the principles of morality, liberalism, and dignity, paraded by its Oligarchy. I certainly feel no inclination to pronounce Mr. Canning a man of exclusive genius; but it will be seen that as early as the period of my seeing him at Liverpool, I described him as the man of talent and tact whom England wanted, in order to extricate her from the false position in which his predecessor had succeeded in plunging her. If Mr. Canning continues as he has done, to make prudent concessions to the new interests of the people of Europe, created by twenty-five years of revolution, there cannot be a doubt that the national character of England will be raised by it, and that British prosperity will be the result of his system. As far as concerned the immediate interest of the monarch, was it not the fact, that the anti-liberal ministry of Castlereagh daily imparted new fuel and new energy to the inevitable re-action of radicalism, while a few simple promises and acts of Mr. Canning have brought back to the foot of the throne, a multitude of

whigs, who were on the point of extending their hands to the partizans of revolutionary reform? Under these considerations, it is painful for a Frenchman to revert to his own country, where a minister of narrow and egotistical views, is compromising the interests of the throne by an insidious course of policy, and gradually degrading the national character by a system of corruption and jobbing, worthy at once of Sir R. Walpole and the Abbé Terray. I may, perhaps, be told in this place, that politics ought to be banished from a work announced to be of a literary character. The wish to exclude politics from literature, is a manœuvre of ministerial chicanery. How can literature be the reflection of the social image, if prohibited from referring to associations which are naturally obtruded on all reflecting minds? We should not be surprised at the French ministry patronizing in fine phraseology, the system pretendingly called classical, but which ought to be called ministerial; a system which tends to deprive France of her popular literature, by condemning authors to the continual invocation of the divinities and heroes of Rome and Athens, or to the disfigurement of national

subjects, by forms exclusively appertaining to antiquity. The less we attend to our national history, the less watchful we shall be of the existing government. It was not so with our Greek and Roman models. Epopee, tragedy, comedy, ode, satire, everything with them had a political object. In conformity with this system, even under the empire, the muse of Claudian took upon herself to exonerate the Gods, when Rufinus had exhausted their long indurance.

The French ministry would, no doubt, prefer having no other association with literature, than such as is furnished by subscriptions and dedications. Unfortunately for them, our literature daily assumes a character of more decided independence. The flower of French talent is in the ranks of the opposition, and the unpopular ministers have the daily mortification of seeing it beat out of the field whatever intellectual eminence may have lent them a transitory assistance.

As to myself (for the reader naturally wishes to know something of the opinions of a traveller, who relating what he has seen and heard, in conformity with his personal prepossessions, is necessarily obliged to occupy

the reader, in some small degree, with his personal affairs): as to myself, I say, I am afraid I have been occasionally too frank in revealing my impressions, and that I have to accuse myself of having displayed too marked an independence of opinion, at the hazard of offending all parties at the same time:

> "The consequence of being of no party,
> I shall offend all parties: never mind."
>
> BYRON.

It is lucky that the independence of an obscure author is of little consequence. I am inclined to think, that I shall not even enjoy the honour of extorting a frown from the powers that be, on account of the few malcontent allusions, scattered here and there through my letters. Brought up, as I have been, in monarchical sentiments, my royalist friends are alone entitled to complain of the too numerous concessions I make to liberal opinion. But what royalist is not liberal now-a-days? Some few individuals, indeed, may still wish to disguise the circumstance from themselves, by investing their greater or less degree of hostility to power with new phrases. No one escapes the influence of his

age. The revolution has enabled us to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil. All persons have become reasoners, in a greater or less degree.

It was only by the opposition; often by an appeal to public good sense; and almost always by a more or less sincere alliance with the new ideas of the age, that the creed of monarchy has recovered its life and popularity, since 1815. It may be added, in order to excuse the discontented spirit of the times, that in all ages, and under all *regimes*, the people have evinced their resistance, and have imposed conditions, which power has neither been able to repel by force, nor to elude by compromise. Would Henry IV. have succeeded in reigning over Catholic France, if he had not thought that a kingdom was worth a mass? At a later period, protestant England deprived James II. of the crown, because he attempted to reign by means of the Jesuits.

I shall not, however, seek to exonerate myself from the charge of a few contradictions, real or supposed, which may be brought against me by those who think that, in politics, all principles must be rigorously conca-

tenated, as a necessary consequence, with their antecedents, and that an individual is obliged to submit to all the exaggerations of any given opinion, on pain of being disavowed by the party holding it. It will be found, therefore, that I defend the catholic religion against anglicanism, without feeling a greater preference for the jesuits; if indeed jesuits can be said to exist in France. I am animated with enthusiasm by old traditions, the prowess of the chivalrous ages, the ruins of feudal towers; but it is not because I survey them through the prism of poetry, that I retain undiminished attachment to the results of the revolution, which I regard as a real indemnity to myself, and all such Frenchmen as have not emigrated. In short, I love liberty, without adopting all its dogmas. I love it as I love Shakspeare, with reference to all which it comprehends of sublime and beautiful.

Literature is now distinguished, like politics, by its parties and shades of opinion. The ensuing work will shew what are my opinions on standing literary questions. I may recapitulate them by anticipation in saying that, as concerns the arts as well as politics, whatever is arbitrary disgusts me; but that

I rather pity than dislike the race of exclusive systematists. Indeed, I sometimes seek and study them, like original *genera*.

The travellers who, up to this time, have published their observations on Great Britain, have devoted themselves in a more especial manner to the consideration of its constitution, its laws, its industry, its commerce, the aspect of the country, &c. than with its poets, its artists, and its authors generally. It has appeared to me, that English literature deserves to be made known, as contributing to the explanation of an epoch, remarkable for its singular union of the most animated enthusiasm for poetical *idealities*, with a not less vehement ardour for the calculations and the labours which depend on the application of the physical sciences. It is an hypothesis, indeed, which might be advantageously maintained, that there is as much of the elements of poetry to be detected in the latter physical discoveries and improvements of England, as in the poetry of Byron, and the novels of Walter Scott. The energy of association is, like the lever of Archimedes, capable of changing the position of the globe. It is this energy which has developed the genius

of James Watt, and that of Rennie. Had they not possessed the means of execution, the theories of those great men would have passed for unsubstantial dreams.

I cannot, indeed, pronounce which view, during my tour, attracted most of my admiration; the vast and splendid chateau—such as that of the Earl of Lonsdale, where ancient hospitality is found connected with modern luxury—or the enormous London brewhouses, the stables of which contain hundreds of horses, worthy of ranking, on the score of size, with those of the King of Brobdignag, and the colossal steam machinery of which supersedes the united power of a thousand workmen.* One is legitimately astonished to see matter, thus endowed with an almighty energy, performing labours which fabulous antiquity would have shrunk from ascribing to the vigour of the god of strength himself. The exaggeration of eastern fairy tale is surpassed by the actual prodigy of mountains levelled into roads; of canals which multiply the communications between cities and sea coasts; of rivers suspended by aërial

* It has been calculated, that the steam-engines of England are equal to the force of two millions of men.

aqueducts over the most impracticable eminences; of bridges which protract their airy forms into the sea in order to supply means of prompt disembarkation to the approaching ship. In short, the tranquil lakes of old Scotland already behold their hitherto undisturbed expanse traversed from shore to shore by those clacking steam-boats, the first of which would have been classed, by the superstitions of a preceding age, among the monsters of Caledonian mythology.

When industry accelerates the march of civilization by miracles such as these, poetry may console herself for the loss of her illusions, since these new manifestations of human genius promise her a series of new images, not less sublime than those which preceded them. Happy they, who, like M. Charles Dupin, successfully devote their talents to describing the progress of the useful arts. It has been my lot, in conformity with a plan marked out for me, to neglect them for the inspirations of the British muse. In the annexed work, I present the public with the results of my communications with some of the most distinguished critics and poets of Great Britain. Although my letters on

poetry are dated from London, they were, for the most part, written in Scotland, or the English counties bordering on that kingdom. At London, my days were almost exclusively devoted to visiting the hospitals, and my evenings to the theatre, or the dinners, which in English houses are notoriously of late duration.

Some of my letters, in which there were private or personal details, have been abridged, and others interrupted. The ordinary formulas of the epistolary style have been dispensed with, for the sake of the Reader.

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HISTORICAL AND LITERARY

TOUR

IN

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

LETTER I.

TO M. B————E.

Calais.

To you my dear friend, I am bound to address those of my letters in which, treating of the traveller rather than the travels, I shall most particularly detail the history of my impressions, and in some measure forget the public, to claim the ever ready indulgence of friendship. You have accustomed me to think aloud with you, if I may use the expression, and in writing to you I shall feel somewhat relieved from the constraint which the title of author necessarily imposes. I shall be more myself when I can thus venture to speak with unrestrained freedom.

We shall quit Calais in two hours, and in four we may perhaps be at Dover. This thought, so gratifying to my impatient curiosity, would, at times, almost render me melancholy, were it not for the reflection that I shall return to France in six months. I can very well conceive the miseries of exile.

We alighted at Dessin's Hotel, which Sterne has celebrated, and where he made his original classification of the different kinds of travellers. Do not suppose that, like him, I choose to rank myself in the category of sentimental travellers. There appears to me so much affectation in Sterne's sensibility, that I cannot think of taking him for my model, though his capricious imagination and his originality occasionally amuse me.* This morning, at breakfast, when we were bidding adieu to French wines, we spoke of Sterne's adventures at Calais, and his drinking the king's health, just after being on the point of abusing his majesty, in a fit of indignation at the *droit d'aubaine*. I did not, like a good christian, follow his example, when I considered that I was about to embark in a fit of spleen not less violent than his; though I trust neither the king nor the law occasioned

* The reader who may have recently perused the history of Lefevre, and the journey of the Abbess des Andouillets, will probably be inclined to dispute the justice of this opinion. There is, however, one powerful argument against the real sensibility of Sterne—he lived and died without a friend; and though he has admirably painted the madness of Maria, he did so after having himself broken the heart of the woman who thought herself beloved by him for the space of five years.

me to be delayed fifteen days in waiting for my passport. There is, indeed, something so vile in the petty tyranny of our police, that one cannot willingly drink the health of even the best of our inquisitors. At all events I should have been very careful not to propose such a toast to the English family, with whom we set out from Paris, and who, in the diligence, forced us to confess, after a comparison between France and England, that the latter at least possessed the two-fold advantage of having neither wolves nor gensd'armes.

In the diligence, I commenced my first lessons in English conversation, being convinced of the necessity of familiarizing my ear to the sounds of a language, which I had hitherto learned only from books. Our travelling companions, a respectable gentleman and his sister, very politely took the trouble to repeat to me certain words with which I thought myself unacquainted, because I now, for the first time, heard their true pronunciation. But I am, above all, indebted to the confidence of the friend, who placed under my safeguard the young lady whom you saw enter the coach with me.

> 'Tis pleasing to be school'd in a strange tongue
> By female lips and eyes.

I could not help applying to myself these lines of Byron, but without concluding the stanza; for Miss Hester's blue eyes are full of candour and intelligence, and her expressive smile, which so well interprets what she is about to utter, has all the

innocence natural to her age. But before I extol her graces and talents, I must mention, lest I should be accused of quitting France with anti-national prejudices, that this young lady spent three years in Paris, whither she was sent for her education, and that she is therefore partly a Frenchwoman. I certainly could not have expected to find a young female of her age possessed of so much information. She has read and felt the beauties of Racine, Fenelon, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, &c., and she is acquainted with the literature of her own country. She speaks with respectful admiration of the works which are rendered classic by age, and discusses with considerable judgment, the merits of the modern poets of Great Britain, whose compositions she repeats in a style which adds to the harmony of the versification. When,

Dans un chemin, montant, sablonneux, malaisé, . .

we left the heavy diligence behind us, and I offered my arm to my fair companion, I was almost persuaded while I listened to her conversation, that the muse of Albion, whose strains I have ever loved, had herself deigned to conduct me to the native land of Shakspeare, Milton and Pope. In this disposition of mind, I joyfully saluted the first wave which we perceived as we approached Boulogne. The sight of the sea also produced a powerful impression on the young lady, who, full of fond recollections of the land of her birth, drew a charming picture of the pleasures which

awaited her at home. In the course of a few hours her wishes will be in part fulfilled, she will embrace her brother, and I shall take a farewell view of the French shore from the summit of the cliff to which Shakspeare has bequeathed his name.

Adieu, my dear friend. You who know me will not be frightened at this first epistle, which is perhaps a little too sentimental, and you will not despair of receiving gayer letters from the traveller in whom you are so kind as to feel interested.

Your friend, &c.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

Having for fifteen months resided in a sea port of the Mediterranean, where, at least once a week, I was accustomed to enjoy an excursion on the water, and to sail to various points remote from the coast, I thought myself secure against sea sickness, and I boldly stepped on board the steam-boat. Seated beside Miss Hester, I was admiring the rapid course of the vessel and the grand aspect of the waves, agitated as they were by a brisk gale. I was not alarmed at a slight sensation of sickness which soon assailed me, and I hoped to divert it away, by fixing my attention on some interesting object. I looked around in the

hope of discerning some majestic ship, and I watched the varied motion of the sea-gull, who in his oblique course endeavoured to contend against the wind, and then suddenly plunged into the sea with a cry of impatience. At length, however, I was compelled to pay the tribute; and it was not until we arrived within two miles of Dover, that I was enabled to raise my head, and recovering my strength resumed my taste for travelling.

Miss Hester's brother, who received us on our landing, conducted us to the Shakspeare Hotel, a very comfortable inn, where I write you this letter, before I pursue my journey to London. The Custom House officers did not detain us long, and the clerks of the Alien Office,* where we exchanged our passports for a certificate, were still more expeditious, so that we had time to visit a portion of the town.

We did not neglect to ascend Shakspeare Cliff, to enjoy the prospect so beautifully described in King Lear. It appears to me, however, that the poet has considerably augmented the height of the chalky masses, whence he says:—

> The fishermen that walk upon the beach,
> Appear like mice.

* I must here once cast a reflection on the state of our police, and observe, that France is perhaps of all countries that in which travellers have the greatest difficulties to encounter, and have most frequently reason to deprecate official delays. Important business often depends on the expedition with which a journey is performed; and persons engaged in mercantile transactions may experience great pecuniary loss for the sake of a trifling formality.—I am also bound in justice to mention the politeness I experienced from the clerks of the Alien Office at Dover.

But I am not inclined to imitate the commentators, who quarrel with Homer for having exaggerated the width of the Hellespont.

The castle, with its terrific fortifications crowning the summit of Shakspeare Cliff, presents no very pleasing aspect. It seems to rise in the face of France as an everlasting monument of enmity and distrust. While we inspected the intrenchments, bastions, &c. I could read in Hester's eyes that her heart was inspired by a kind of Spartan sentiment, a feeling of heroic enthusiasm for her country, which she thus beheld armed in warlike terrors. I smiled at the fire which animated her soft blue eyes, while she contemplated the immense mass of military architecture. She wished me to share her admiration; but I could not enter into her feelings so warmly as she would have wished. All my astonishment was reserved for Queen Anne's pocket pistol; a beautiful piece of cannon adorned with sculptured ornaments, which was presented by the states of Holland to Queen Anne, and which is said to be capable of firing a ball to the distance of seven miles. Pallas herself does not appear with attributes so formidable as this.

From the time of William the Conqueror, Dover has been regarded as the key and barrier of England. The foundation of its old Castle is even attributed to Julius Cæsar. Several of the towers are evidently of Norman origin; but works of recent date attest that the camp of Boulogne at least inspired prudent precautions against a

threatened invasion, which, as the *Memorial of St. Helena* informs us, was not merely an empty demonstration of hostilities. Dover Castle, though it has at all times been a formidable citadel, was, nevertheless, in the reign of Charles I. taken by twelve men. This was the nocturnal exploit of an ardent republican named Drake, who escaladed the rock, and so skilfully managed his attack, that the garrison, thinking they were assailed by a numerous force, surrendered at discretion. The forts which command Dover seem to threaten rather than defend the city, when it is considered that all its prosperity depends on peace. It is the interest both of Dover and Calais to remain on amicable terms with each other. Parents on either side of the channel readily exchange their children for a time, in order to familiarize them equally with both languages. These hostages present sufficient evidence of the community of interests. If in Calais we may fancy ourselves in England, we may also in some measure suppose ourselves in France when at Dover.

From Shakspeare Cliff we descended into the town by a curious flight of stairs, cut circularly in the rock, and I took a walk through some of the streets. The eye is naturally struck with the slightest peculiarities in the aspect of a foreign nation, which one visits for the first time. I certainly observed characteristic traits in the appearance of the innkeepers. The English novel writers who are so fond of painting these characters, copy

from a given model, which, though it admits of but little scope for variety, is nevertheless true to nature.

The difference of dress is by no means remarkable. I was therefore immediately struck by the appearance of two quaker ladies, whose costume is as unlike that of the rest of the English population, as the dress of our nuns differs from that of the ladies of Paris.

This comparison occurs to me, because I thought I could trace a resemblance between the modest deportment and simple appearance of these quaker ladies, and the air of calm piety which our French nuns preserve, even amidst the tumult of crowded cities. There are, indeed other traits of similitude between the forms of the society of friends and the rules of several catholic congregations; but as I hope to have an opportunity of making myself acquainted with the tenets of the different christian sects in England, I shall suspend my remarks on this subject, until I collect that degree of information which a foreigner cannot acquire, until after he has resided for some time in a country.

I hear the sound of a horn beneath my window: it is the signal for the departure of the stage in which we have engaged places. I have therefore only time to say adieu.

LETTER III.

To the same.

If you wish to form an idea of the vehicle which conveyed us from Dover to London, you must banish all thoughts of the heavy rolling machines which daily depart from the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. Picture to yourself a neat coach, drawn by four spirited horses, seemingly proud of their fleetness and the good harnesses with which they are provided, a well fed and well dressed coachman on the box, and a guard behind. Such was the equipage which I found waiting for me at the door of the Shakspeare Hotel.

I resigned my inside place to Miss Hester, who had to go only about half way to London, and mounted the roof of the coach, where a gentleman may take his place without compromising his dignity, and which indeed is preferred by those who wish to see the country.

Our Automedon smacked his whip, and we soon found ourselves on a fine road as smooth as the gravel walk of a park, along which our wheels rolled so softly that they scarcely left a trace behind them. More than thirty similar coaches proceed in the same direction. We outstripped some, and were ourselves outstripped by others. A spirit of rivalry animates both horses and

drivers; and as they are always meeting with new competitors, the contest is continually kept up. As we drove through the fertile county of Kent, smiling amphitheatres of gardens arose on either side of us; and the hop, for a moment deceiving me, reminded me of the vines on the hills of Provence, where I passed my youth.

These rural landscapes were soon combined with scenery of a more sublime character. On our right the horizon widened and was bounded by the Thames, like an ocean in miniature covered with numerous vessels at full sail. Amidst this variety of scenes, some remarkable for graceful simplicity, and others for grandeur, I recognised the inspirations of Thomson and Cowper, the chiefs of that descriptive school of poetry, in which our Delille does not occupy the lowest rank. Thomson, who is elevated in style, enthusiastic in sentiment, and occasionally somewhat declamatory, loves to paint nature in all her magnificence, and embraces a vast horizon in his pictures. Cowper is more reserved, simple and familiar, more rigidly pious, and more a painter of common life.

We stopped but a short time at Canterbury, whose sublime cathedral I shall take another opportunity of describing.

After taking a hasty dinner at Rochester, we pursued our rapid journey to London without further interruption. As evening approached we perceived a distant fog, amidst which, the sun which had shone incessantly since morning, was

suddenly setting, reduced to a rayless disk, and presenting the effect of a furnace of fire gradually extinguishing amidst clouds of smoke. This thick fog covered London, the suburbs of which we discerned in the departing twilight. How admirably has Byron described the first aspect of London.

> A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,
> Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
> Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
> In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
> Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
> On tiptoe through their sea coal canopy;
> A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
> On a fool's head—and there is London Town!

Adieu.

LETTER IV.

TO M——— G———.

Before I enter the vast confines of the English Babylon, I will retrace my course, and carry you along with me to take a rapid view of Kent, Surrey, and Middlesex. I will endeavour to sketch the general aspect of these three counties, and I will proceed with the swiftness of the stage-coach, a comparison which may here be appropriately substituted for the common place similes of a dart, or the flight of a bird. We will stop only where our attention is claimed by some remarkable

feature in the vast landscape, of which I shall attempt to give you an idea, though I think there are few countries in which the delays of a lingering journey would be more amply compensated. On every side the eye is gratified by traces of rich cultivation, or by picturesque scenery; for taste and art have conferred beauty even on those parts where the unfertile soil rejects the labour of the husbandman. Parks and pleasure grounds extending over hill and dale, inclose within their boundaries verdant meadows and gently murmuring streams. The various edifices here and there scattered over these lovely pictures, present contrasts no less poetic, while they serve to represent every period of history. The Norman tower and gothic steeple are succeeded by the castle of modern architecture, and the simple protestant church; while the farm and manufactory flourishing fearlessly near the abode of the feudal lord, indicate the ideas and manners of the present time. An air of security, comfort, and happiness universally prevails; so that amidst all these palaces and monuments of architecture, this luxuriance of vegetation and activity of labour, it is difficult to guess where are the hiding places of the vagrants and thieves, who are denounced in the public papers, and in the registers of the courts of justice.

The county of Kent has furnished subjects for a charming series of lithographic drawings published by M. Hulmandel, the idea of which was suggested by the *voyages picturesque de l'ancienne*

France. Kent also affords a vast field for historical research. Few parts of Great Britain have been distinguished by so many great events. The Roman eagles were first planted in Kent; and this county was the scene of the sanguinary battles of the Saxons, and the cradle of English catholicism. Even now the celebrated metropolitan cathedral of Canterbury gives it a sort of supremacy in the English church. Kent owes its beautiful and varied scenery, to its proximity to the sea, its communication with the Thames, and with five other secondary rivers, the continued rise and fall of the ground, and the numerous parks with which it is adorned. The Kentish farmers hold the highest rank among the agricultural classes of England; and landed property is here kept in the same family during a series of generations. By the law called the gavelkind, which prevails in some parts of the county, the Kentish yeoman shares his property equally among his children, and bequeathes to all his name and his example.

Of all the productions of Kent, I am most inclined to bestow my tribute of praise on the hop; for I found the home-brewed ale delicious. I cannot admit that the red fruits of Kent equal in flavour those which are grown in the neighbourhood of Paris, though the English frequently assert this to be the fact. The cherry-trees in Kent frequently bend down under the weight of their fruit. If the hop at first glance somewhat resembles the vine, the cherry may be regarded as the grape of England, and its juice is converted

into a light agreeable wine. The English ladies are fond of offering their visitors this British nectar, which, in most instances, is prepared by themselves; but those who prefer the generous juice of the southern grape, must be careful to avoid an error of orthography and pronunciation into which a Frenchman may very naturally fall, namely to ask for *sherry* instead of *cherry*-wine.*

Maidstone, which descends in an amphitheatre on the sloping banks of the Medway, is situated in a district equally fertile in hop plantations and fruit trees, which are even more abundant here than in the neighbourhood of Canterbury. But the latter city more decidedly claims the attention of the traveller, on account of its historical importance, and its religious monuments. The grand ruins of the monastery formed by St. Augustin the apostle of England, still bears evidence of the proscription of Henry VIII. The principal entrance forms part of a brewery, and the remains of the church are lost in the yard of an inn. One naturally seeks to banish the painful ideas which such a profanation cannot fail to excite, by inspecting the cathedral, and the venerable monuments it contains. The whole is in a perfect state of preservation. For the space of twelve centuries this edifice has been respected as the temple of God; and the pious emotion which pervades the heart on entering the sanctuary,

* French translators of novels have occasionally fallen into this error; which might lead their readers to doubt the temperance of the English ladies,

sufficiently proclaims the presence of the Deity. I refer you to the poetry of Charles Nodier for a description of this sublime structure: yet I must detain you for a moment at the tomb of the Black Prince. His statue lies on the tomb, arrayed in full armour, and with the hands folded in the attitude of prayer. Over the monument are suspended his coat of arms, gauntlets and sword: vain trophies of human glory! The solemn grandeur of the place is encreased by the image of the warrior thus supplicating like a penitent sinner. The knees of pious pilgrims have worn the surface of the stones, round the spot where a magnificent altar once rose above the shrine containing the relicks of a martyr, by whose name a part of the cathedral is still distinguished: for the name of Becket survives the faith for which he died. If, like the protestants, we divest him of the saintly glory with which he has been encircled, he will be found to be one of the most extraordinary characters which history presents. Henry II. had restored order in his dominions, and had succeeded in restraining the petty tyrants who oppressed his people. The ecclesiastical authority alone annoyed him; and that he might govern the priesthood as he governed his barons, he resolved to confer the primacy on his chancellor Thomas à Becket, his most able and confidential adviser, a devoted courtier and warrior, a statesman, everything in short, but a churchman. The clergy loudly condemned this ludicrous choice. Becket, however, was ordained a priest one day, and conse-

crated a bishop the next, in spite of the advice of the queen mother, the general opinion of the nation, the opposition of the clergy, and the wishes of Becket himself, who warned the monarch that he must henceforth prefer God to his king. Accordingly the primate of Canterbury immediately *put off the old man, and put on the new one.* In resigning his civil functions, he renounced the character he had maintained in exercising them. On being created chief of the ecclesiastical power, he became the rival of the chief of the secular authority. As if with the view of sanctifying his ambition, he wore a garment of hair-cloth beneath the purple robe of the archbishop. He exhibited the munificence and splendour of a sovereign, when he proudly represented the pontiff of the Lord before the powers of the earth, and he scourged himself like a penitent in his palace, eating bitter herbs and quenching his thirst with nauseous drinks. He rigorously exacted the payment of his revenues, and jealously contended for those which the king wished to withhold from him; while he distributed all his treasures in charity, visiting the sick and washing the feet of the poor. He enforced his rights almost with seditious fury, and was inflexible in his most unimportant determinations. In his last moments he evinced the restrained violence of the conspirator, the resignation of the holy martyr, and the dignity of Cæsar, falling enveloped in his toga. The catastrophe of Thomas á Becket's death would form a subject for the pen of Sir Walter Scott.

Henry II. irritated by the continual resistance of Becket, imprudently expressed a desire for his death; and four barons, Reginald Fitzurse, William de Tracy, Richard Brito, and Hugh de Noneville, swore to accomplish the monarch's wish, or to quell the refractory spirit of the prelate. They conveyed to him an order of banishment; but this Becket defied: and when he was informed that they were arming themselves in the court-yard of the palace, he calmly retired to the cathedral, where seeing the monks engaged in closing the doors, he said:- "You must not make a citadel of the church; I came hither not to resist, but to suffer." He ascended the steps of the grand altar, when the barons and their followers rushed into the choir sword in hand, exclaiming: "Where is Thomas á Becket? where is the traitor to the king and the kingdom?" No answer was returned to this enquiry, and they then exclaimed still more loudly—"Where is the archbishop?" Becket descended the steps saying—"Here I am,—not a traitor, but a priest, ready to suffer for the sake of him who redeemed my soul. God forbid that I should fly for the fear of your swords."

"Annul," said the barons, "the censures you have pronounced."—"No satisfaction has been obtained," replied the Archbishop: "I cannot absolve." "Thou shalt die then!" exclaimed one of the assassins.—"Reginald," said Becket, addressing Fitzurse, "I have loaded thee with benefits, and yet thou art armed against me!"—"Come from this

place," exclaimed the baron, who was determined on the fulfilment of his oath; and he seized the archbishop by the robe. Becket declared that he would not stir. "Come hence, I say," continued Fitzurse, stung by a last feeling of remorse.—"I will not quit this place," replied Becket firmly. "If you seek my blood, I freely give it you for the peace and freedom of the church; but, in Heaven's name, I entreat that you will not harm my servants."—The murderers would have wished to perpetrate their crime in a less holy place: but the primate held by one of the pillars and struggled with his assailants. For a moment he recovered the strength which had distinguished him in his warlike days. He almost levelled Tracy with the ground, and repulsed Fitzurse, to whom in his indignation he addressed an opprobrious term. Fitzurse then aimed a blow at him. A monk, who interposed to ward it off, had his arm nearly severed in two, and Becket was wounded. Resigned to his martyrdom, he kneeled down to pray, and in his last words, he recommended himself and the cause of the church to God, the Virgin, and the saints. A second blow laid him prostrate before the altar of St. Benedict. He had sufficient presence of mind to wrap himself in his robe, and devoutly joining his hands, he expired amidst repeated strokes of battle axes and swords.

Of the primates who have occupied the see of Canterbury since the time of Thomas á Becket, the two most celebrated in history suffered a tragical death. The first, Cranmer, one of the favourers

of protestantism, in the reign of Henry VIII. was dragged to the burning pile in the religious reaction which ensued in the reign of Mary. The second, Archbishop Laud, forfeited his head on the scaffold, in the puritanical tumults which prevailed at the latter end of the reign of Charles I.

LETTER V.

TO M———.

I ALMOST promised that my last letter should be *picturesque*;—and perhaps it may more properly be termed *historical*. The strongest impression exclusively engrosses the mind, and when the recollection of a great event suddenly carries us from the present time, it is not in our power to confine ourselves within the limits of the plan which we traced out on first taking up the pen. I know not whither I may be led in endeavouring to sketch the various remarkable spots in the counties of Middlesex and Surrey; but when I visited these charming scenes, I thought I should find it difficult to refrain from celebrating them in the trite form of a pastoral. As to the climate of Great Britain, which has been so much abused, I can only say that I find it very agreeable. I not only admire the delightful serenity of the nights; but in the day time, the sun, which is

by no means so great a rarity as I expected it to be, produces the most beautiful effects of light and shadow on the numerous rises and falls of the ground, which is every where covered with the freshest verdure.

" God made the country, and man made the town,"

says Cowper; and it appears to me, that in England, of all other nations, the country is most worthy of God. If it cannot always boast of grandeur, every little meadow has an air of grace and beauty, were it only on account of the green hedge by which it is surrounded. The roads in France call to mind the cities to which they lead; but in England roads belong more especially to the country. They are kept in as good condition as the walks or drives in a park; and people of fortune, who have parks and pleasure grounds, never appear to be really at home, except in their own houses. In their country residences, the English nobility and gentry are surrounded by all the luxuries and comforts of life. Here they forego the etiquette which they so scrupulously observe in town. With their fine horses and hounds they enjoy the healthful sports of the field; or in tranquil retirement resign themselves to the contemplation of the choicest productions of art, and the stores of their valuable libraries. It has been justly observed, that our nobility withdraw to the country to repair their fortunes, when broken up and dissipated by extravagance in Paris. The

English aristocracy, on the other hand, live in the most profuse style in the country: when ruined, they rather hide themselves in London, or go and economize on the continent. The foreigner who visits Hampton-court, Sion House, Chiswick, Strawberry Hill, &c. in Middlesex, cannot but admire the happy union of the beauties of art and nature. The county of Surrey is also rich in villas, rivalling in elegance those of Italy, and containing treasures of art which might be supposed to exist only in Raphael's native land. Amidst such resources it is not easy to conceive that *ennui* is a disease essentially English; and it is difficult to account for the restless spirit which sends to the continent so many of the descendants of illustrious British heroes, roaming in quest of adventures like their noble ancestors ... But no; instead of consoling the widow and orphan, they are contracting debts, and wasting their money upon our Opera figurantes.

The outskirts of London advance a considerable way into Middlesex and Surrey; but at the same time its suburbs present so rural an aspect, that it is difficult to say whether the country is encroaching on the town or the town on the country. Kensington-gardens, at the western extremity of London, may be compared to the park of St. Cloud, rather than to the Tuileries. Near Kensington-gardens is Holland-house, where the celebrated Fox loved to forget political turmoils in the cultivation of literature. Holland-house was the residence of Addison, the

author of Cato, who exercised more influence on his contemporaries as a writer than a statesman, and who for a while approximated English dramatic literature to the rules of French classic authors, though he raised his voice against the artificial style of our system of gardening. But unfortunately he could not convert his better half to the rules of the conjugal hierarchy. He married a fair Countess of the house of Holland, who regarded her noble birth as a more positive superiority than the literary talents of her husband. Poor Addison died of grief, being almost reduced to play the part of George Dandin.

The recollection of the principal writer of the Spectator, directs my thoughts to Stepney, whose old church is surrounded by tomb-stones, the singular epitaphs on which have been noticed by Steele. The village poets of the present day are not more sparing of the memory of the dead, and the humble grave-stone is doomed to record their compositions. In this respect Paris can claim no advantage over London, for even in our most superior burial grounds, the monumental marble exhibits the dull or ludicrous expressions of vanity, rather than the effusions of grief. Epitaphs really form a part of the literature of a people; indeed some ages of the world have transmitted to us no other historical monuments than tombs. If literary censorship be good at all, certainly it would be but just to exercise it in favour of those whom death consigns to the ridicule excited by vulgar encomium. The epitaph

is a part of the sacred worship of the dead; why then should it not be subjected to the rules of decorum, like funeral ceremonies? Calumny and slander are generally buried in the grave; why then should we be flattered by the ignorance or affectation of friends or even strangers? Would we not consign to oblivion the revered names of a parent or benefactor, rather than expose them to ridicule? In England, an epitaph frequently consists merely of a verse of scripture, which perhaps, after all, is most appropriate to the tomb of a Christian. One of the most affecting traditions revived by Sir Walter Scott, is that of the presbyterian, Old Mortality, who visits burial grounds, to retrace the obliterated names of the martyrs of his faith, and the holy attributes which adorn their grave-stones. It would doubtless have cost him a pang of regret to have rescued from oblivion the decaying monuments of his brethren, had their claims on his pious recollection been recorded by doggrel verses and grotesque emblems.

This digression has led me for a moment from Middlesex; and if I conduct you into the smiling county of Surrey, it will not be for the sake of shewing you Richmond Hill or Kew, but of describing to you a place which was once the temple of conjugal felicity, and is now a monument of England's grief. I allude to Claremont, where for a brief space, the Princess Charlotte enjoyed that domestic happiness which so rarely falls to the lot of sovereigns. A little temple which was

commenced by the Princess, and finished by Prince Leopold, has been converted into a mausoleum, and contains a bust of her whose loss has been so long and sincerely deplored. The cypress, the yew, and the larch, mingling their gloomy foliage with the brighter verdure of other trees, diffuse around the structure a shade perfectly in unison with the melancholy ideas which such a place must naturally inspire. In the present age, when thrones are stripped of their illusion, and sovereigns appear such as they really are, the universal regret of which the Princess Charlotte is still the object, sufficiently attests the virtues which distinguished her. Public opinion boldly subjects the royal dead to that impartial judgment which was pronounced over the remains of the sovereigns of Egypt. All parties have deplored the premature death of the daughter of England. Tears like these are well worth a funeral oration by Bossuet.

The house and grounds of Claremont were planned by Messrs. Kent and Brown, of whom I shall hereafter speak more at length. The apartments are fitted up in a style of elegant simplicity, and a spirit of order and economy prevails in the distribution of the furniture and ornaments. The pictures consist of family portraits. To use an expression of Bonaparte's, Charlotte's heart *was not in her head.*

LETTER VI.

TO M. A. DE CHEVRY.

At Seven Oaks, a town in Kent so called from seven oak-trees, which would now be looked for in vain, we find the tradition of the famous Jack Cade, who, at the head of a band of insurgent peasantry, defeated the army of Henry VI. commanded by Sir Humphrey Stafford. This might be truly called a war of *la Jacquerie*. At the same period England also had her *war of the league*, in the civil conflicts of the red and white roses. If I may continue these parallels, it may be observed, that the revolution gave us our Charles I. our anarchy styled *republican*, and our Cromwell; but let us hope that these comparisons will end with *our double restoration*.

In the neighbourhood of Seven Oaks are the magnificent park and Castle of Knowle, the residence of the Sackvilles, Dukes of Dorset. An ancestor of this family, Lord Buckhurst, has left his name in literature by his tragedy of *Gorboduc*, the first imitation of the regular classic drama. Lest any Aristarchus should be inclined to reproach Shakspeare, for not having taken the author of Gorboduc as his model, it may be observed that this tragedy is but a tissue of monotonous narratives and speeches, and a cold and heavy accumulation of incidents. There is more

poetic merit in the verses which this same nobleman has introduced into his collection of legends, entitled the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

I will now transport you to more poetic ground, namely Penshurst Park, the birth-place of Sir Philip Sydney, the author of *Arcadia*, and the most accomplished knight of Queen Elizabeth's court. Beside a beautiful piece of water stands a memorable oak tree, which is said to have been planted at the birth of Sydney, and which has been successively celebrated by Ben Jonson and Waller. The Sacharissa of the latter was a Sydney.

> Go boy, and carve this passion on the bark
> Of yonder tree, which stands the sacred mark
> Of noble Sydney's birth.

Sir Philip Sydney, who, in the court of a queen more pedantic than amiable, was distinguished above every other for chivalric gallantry; that knight, whose life, says Campbell, may be regarded as poetry in action; that great Captain who for his valour on the field of glory, was offered the crown of Poland at the death of Stephen Bartori, was originally merely a humble dependant on the Earl of Oxford. His dispute with that nobleman shews the length to which the aristocratic pretensions of the privileged classes were at that period carried. Sydney, having been called a puppy by the earl, gave him the lie, and went out of the Tennis Court where they had been playing, expecting to be followed. Lord Oxford did not, however, think proper to demand

honourable satisfaction for the affront; and the queen, interfering in the affair, reminded Sydney of the difference between a nobleman and a private gentleman. She required that he should make an apology; but Sydney refused to submit to this, and retired to Penshurst, where, for the amusement of his sister, he composed his *Arcadia:* This pastoral romance, which has been too highly praised by some, and too severely condemned by others, bears some resemblance to *Urfé's Astrée* and Montemayor's *Diana.* It is also in many respects an imitation of Sannazar, particularly in the verses in every kind of measure with which it is interspersed, and which are certainly not the best part of the work. Shakspeare, Spencer, and other distinguished poets have occasionally imitated Sydney; and Milton bitterly reproaches Charles I. for having borrowed from him a prayer which is introduced in the *Ikon Basiliké,* an eloquent manifesto long attributed to the royal victim. Indeed one of Milton's strange accusations against Charles is, that he sometimes read the Arcadia to divert the melancholy hours of his captivity. The taste for pastoral romances is now extinct; yet the Arcadia deserves to be read, were it only as a literary monument of the reign of Elizabeth. It exhibits the figurative style, the mythological allusions, and the fatiguing allegories which were so much in favour at the time. Sydney, like his contemporaries, sometimes indulged in affectation and *concetti,* merely to gratify the taste of the virgin queen; but the style of the Arcadia is cer-

tainly more pure, nervous, and clear than that of any other work of the same date.

Sydney was but thirty-two years of age when he closed his brilliant career by a premature death. In the reign of Elizabeth the adventurous spirit of preceding ages survived the feudal chivalry; and this spirit instigated the maritime enterprises, and even the piratical expeditions of Sir Francis Drake. Sydney formed the determination of secretly setting out on a voyage of discovery, but Elizabeth, being informed of his intention, forbade his visiting foreign countries in quest of adventures, in the same arbitrary way as she had opposed the wishes of the Poles, when they offered him the crown. Sydney was appointed governor of Flushing. He commanded the English cavalry in the army of his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, and he received a mortal wound in a battle which was fought near Zutphen. Exhausted by loss of blood, and tormented by thirst, he raised to his lips a draught of water which had been brought to him; but perceiving a poor soldier, more grievously wounded than himself, who cast a longing eye on the drink offered to his general, Sydney immediately handed the cup to the dying soldier, saying: "Comrade, you need it more than I." In his last moments he evinced the heroism of the warrior, the patience of the philosopher, and the resignation of the Christian. Like Socrates, he died reflecting on the immortality of the soul, and affectionately thinking of his friends.

When I bade adieu to the secular oak of Pens-

hurst, I should, as a Frenchman, have been jealous of the glory of Sydney, had I not recollected that we may proudly oppose to him the life and death of the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche.*

LETTER VII.

TO M. P. B————N.

MY DEAR UNCLE,

My preceding letter, and the subject of my present one, naturally remind me of the old cypress, which casts its vast shade over the terrace of your country house, and which is as dear and sacred to you as the chesnut tree described in the *Mysteries of Udolpho* was to St. Aubert. Trees which have shaded the cradle of the old proprietors of a domain, and to which local and family traditions are attached, are venerable witnesses of the past, and serve to link generations together. Even when not connected with historical circumstances, they revive recollections of childhood, which are always gratifying to the heart in mature age. I often think how many times you and I have sought shelter from a sudden shower beneath the great cypress, smiling to see that not a drop of rain could penetrate its thick foliage. How often have I climbed to its pointed summit, where I have found a pleasant seat on two crossed branches,

whence I perceived on the one hand the sterile brows of our little Alps, and on the other the smiling gardens of Saint Remy. Often in the sports of my boyish days, I loved to hide myself amidst the slender filaments of its leaves, for the sake of momentarily alarming my mother, by remaining deaf to her voice when she repeatedly called me, until a childish titter would betray me and dispel her fears. I think I may attribute to my attachment to your venerable cypress, the respect I cherish for all trees which resemble it in age, form, or situation.

In journeying through the counties of Kent and Surrey, I experienced the twofold disappointment of not discovering the site of Says Court at Deptford, and of being the last tree cut down in Evelyn's Park, at Wotton.

In Queen Elizabeth's time, the loyal Earl of Surrey formed a little camp at Says Court, while the elegant Leicester, by his artful gallantry, was banishing his rival's services from the recollection of his royal mistress. Even at that period Says Court belonged to the Evelyn family, and the author of *The Sylva*, subsequently resigned the residence to Peter the Great, when that monarch served his apprenticeship in Deptford Dock-yard. But it is of John Evelyn himself that I particularly wish to speak. In Sydney we admire the *beau ideal* of the knight of the sixteenth century; and Evelyn presents a model of the English gentleman in the reign of the two Charleses. Evelyn was born at Wotton, and received his education, first at Eton

and then at Oxford. His tutor at Baliol College was the famous Bradshaw, and after escaping through twenty-five years of revolution, the protection of the regicide professor proved his safeguard. On the first gathering of the political storm Evelyn quitted England, and travelled over a part of the Continent. His diary contains some curious remarks on the gardens and parks of France and Italy. According to the fashion of the time, he was an admirer of Le Notre and the French taste. In describing the Tuileriès, he mentions a labyrinth of cypress trees which no longer exists. "There is also," he says, "an artificial echo, redoubling the words distinctly, and it is never without some faire nymph singing to it. Standing at one of the focuses, which is under a tree, or little cabinet of hedges, the voice seems to descend from the clouds; at another as if it was under ground."

Evelyn highly extols the gardens of the Luxembourg, which he calls a terrestrial paradise. The Duke of Orleans, who then resided at the Luxembourg, kept a number of tortoises. The duke prohibited the destruction of wolves on his estates, and these animals multiplied to such an extent in the forest of Orleans, that they sometimes carried off the children from the streets of Blois.

In Italy our traveller admires, among other curiosities, an immense aviary, in which, for the amusement of the winged captives, a whole park was enclosed. At Padua he was cured of angina

by the famous Salvatico; and taking a fancy to study medicine, he went through a complete course of anatomy. He attended three dissections, and he mentions having directed the preparation of a pair of lungs, a liver, the sixth pair of nerves, and the gastric veins, which he sent to England. "They were," he observes, "the first of that kind that had been seen there, and for aught I know in the world; though afterwards there were others." London now possesses Hunter's excellent anatomical museum.

On his return to Paris, Evelyn indulged for a short time in the *far niente;* but he soon found occupation for his leisure in learning the Spanish and German languages, the lute, dancing, chemistry, and in paying his addresses to the daughter of Sir Charles Brown, the English resident, whom he married, and who survived him after having been for fifty years the happiest of wives.

The revolution was now completed, and continued emigration was painful to Evelyn. He returned to England, and was attacked by two robbers, who plundered him and tied him to a tree. He arrived at last at Deptford, where he purchased the estate of his father-in-law, with his consent, and that of the exiled king. Others, as he observes, were not so scrupulous in purchasing national property.

Here it was that Evelyn's agricultural life commenced. His rural labours at Says Court afford a starting point for a sketch of the art of English planting, which forms the special subject of this

letter, and which I shall continue from Twickenham and Strawberry-hill, where the revolution in the taste of gardening was effected.

The estate of Says Court, when Evelyn purchased it, consisted solely of a large field of about one hundred acres, with an orchard and a holm hedge. Evelyn began by laying out an oval garden. The muse of Milton divined the charming irregularity of the English style of gardening; but Le Notre, the recognized legislator of the parks and pleasure grounds of the age, formed them exclusively into classic models. Yet his mal-adroit imitators, Procrustes like, so mutilated the trees, that the captive promenaders, deprived of any thing like a view, were condemned to wander through alleys from which every thing like variety was shut out, and to be fatigued by a monotonous repetition of the same terraces, basins, and parterres, carved into geometrical compartments, the same clipped arbours, and formal recesses, accompanied by the grotesque ornaments of trees cut into the most fantastic shapes. Theobald's gardens were the finest in England, before the levellers, declaring war against castles if not against cottages, destroyed that magnificent residence, where the despotic Elizabeth so often entertained Burleigh and Leicester; where James, the royal gossip, who seemed to have inherited rather the farthingale than the sceptre of the eighth Henry's daughter, forgot his barren realm of Scotland, amidst theological disputations; and finally, where Charles, a good husband and father, some-

times joined in the sports of his children. In like manner, the axe of the revolution spared not the trees of Greenwich, St. James's and Hyde-parks. Evelyn, who had the good fortune to be forgotten in his retirement,

> Attendu que, dans ces dernières,
> Le pillage serait sans priz.
>
> *Berchoux.*

laid out his garden on the plan of those he had seen in France and Italy.

Meanwhile, Cromwell enjoyed the last monarchical honours by being buried in the royal sepulchre of Westminster. His son, who had a stronger sense of the troubles than of the advantages of a throne, soon allowed himself to be quietly removed from it, Monk deserted the republican cause, and the statue of the protector was suspended by a rope from the windows of Whitehall. Evelyn then withdrew from the quiet pursuits of agriculture, to perform a part in the restoration of the Stuarts. On the 29th of May, 1660, he wrote in his journal as follows :—

" This day his Majy. Charles the second, came to London, after a sad and long exile, and calamitous suffering, both of the king and church, being 17 yeares. This was also his birthday, and with a triumph of above 20,000 horse and foote, brandishing their swords and shouting with inexpressible joy ; the wayes strew'd with flowers, the bells ringing, the streetes hung with tapistry, fountaines running with wine ; the maior, aldermen, and

all the companies in their liveries, chains of gold, and banners; lords and nobles clad in cloth of silver, gold and velvet; the windowes and balconies all set with ladies; trumpets, music, myriads of people flocking, even so far as from Rochester, so as they were seven houres in passing the citty, even from 2 in the afternoon, till 9 at night.

"I stood in the Strand and beheld it, and bless'd God. All this was don without one drop of blood shed, and by that very army which rebell'd against him: but it was y^e^ Lord's doing, for such a restauration was never mention'd in any history, ancient or modern, since the returne of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity; nor so joyfull a day and so bright ever seene in this nation, this hapning when to expect or effect it was past all human policy."

I love to describe in the very words of an eye-witness, a spectacle, which was re-produced in France with the same details in 1814.

After the return of the Stuarts, Sir Richard Brown rejoined his son-in-law. Evelyn appeared at court, and was better received than the worthy Peveril of the Peak. It is true that Evelyn's self-love was less exorbitant than that of the poor knight of Maultrassie Hall. He did not demand a peerage, and Charles gave him an appointment, which flattered his benevolent disposition: viz. the inspection of the hospitals. In this office, Evelyn displayed the magnanimous courage of a true citizen, in braving the dangers of a contagious disorder. At a later period, the famous fire

of London occurred, which he has described in his journal with great simplicity, and yet with poetical effect. The manner in which he proposed to rebuild the city, coincided in many respects with the plan of Sir Christopher Wren. Always the friend of the unfortunate, Evelyn's virtues preserved for him the king's esteem, while he continued the friend of statesmen who were disgraced. He loved Charles, but lamented his misconduct.

The day after the death of that Prince, Evelyn noted down the following remarks in his diary:

"I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and prophanenesse, gaming and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulnesse of God, (it being Sunday evening) which this day sen'night I was witnesse of, the king sitting and toying with his concubines, *Portsmouth*, *Cleveland*, and *Mazarine*, &c. a French boy singing love songs, in that glorious gallery, whilst above twenty of the greate courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset round a large table; a bank of at least two thousand pounds in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust!"

The conduct of James completed the ruin of the Stuarts in the opinion of the English nation. The revolution of William and of Mary, the Servilia of modern times, brought with it mortifications for Evelyn, and he retired altogether from the court. He also left Deptford for Wotton, the

place of his birth, where, in a peaceful and healthy old age, he employed himself in taking care of those trees, the rearing of which had been his amusement amidst political tempests.

Evelyn was not merely the modest gentleman farmer of his age, the charitable philosopher, the virtuous courtier, the kind husband, who while he educates his children, embellishes his estate and amuses his leisure by study, does some good to his friends, and dying is forgotten,—Evelyn was the author of the Sylva; and if England should ever erect a temple to her maritime glory, the statue of Evelyn ought to have a place therein.

"While Britain," says d'Israeli, "retains her awful situations among the nations of Europe, the *Sylva* of Evelyn will endure with her triumphant oaks. * * * * * * * * *

It was an author in his studious retreat, who casting a prophetic eye on the age we live in, secured the late victories of our naval sovereignty. Inquire at the Admiralty how the fleets of Nelson have been constructed? and they can tell you that it was with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted."

To speak only of Evelyn's influence on the English landscape, it may be observed that, thanks to him, England not only saw young plants replace the ancient oaks, which the political levellers had proscribed as a kind of vegetable aristocracy; but those trees issuing from dock-yards to circumnavigate the globe, have brought back to the climate, which gave them birth, a rich variety of

foreign plants, whose variegated tints now mingle with the foliage of the shoots those oaks left behind them. The blending of different shades, and the contrast of forms, produced by the union of indigenous plants with exotics, do not embellish the gardens of Kew alone. These precious vegetable productions are also to be seen in most of the pleasure grounds of England, and attest the enterprising spirit of her mariners.

There is little artifice of style in Evelyn's work, the agriculturist appears in every page, but the writer does not display himself. He is interesting, however, in consequence of the love which he shows to his trees, whose *education* appeared to him a patriotic duty. He addressed himself to a corrupt generation, who required to be regenerated in the mild pursuits of cultivation, and far from the pestilential atmosphere of the court. It was an important object to withdraw men of fortune from the fatal seductions of voluptuousness and debauchery. We need in France an eloquent voice to give warning against the no less fatal seductions of stock-jobbing, which are so fatal to the fortunes and the health of both high and low.

LETTER VIII.

TO M. DE T————E.

I WOULD have written to you on the day after my arrival, had I not been afraid to infect you through my letter with all the dulness, which I experienced on my first day's residence in London. If an English Sunday is a sadness to every one, it must be particularly so to the traveller, who on that day awakens for the first time amidst the immense labyrinth of the streets of the British capital. It was rainy weather; but, notwithstanding, I did not think it necessary to confine myself to the contracted apartment I had got at an hotel; and I flattered myself with the idea of going as it were in disguise to find out the public buildings, and to form a judgment of them, free from the illusion of those recollections, with which a known public monument is always embellished.

After seeing the same objects in the way they are generally seen, that is to say by consulting the Foreigner's Directory, or accompanied by an obliging guide, you can speak more decidedly, and on comparing first with second impressions, you may expect to be more impartial.

I looked in vain for something picturesque in the thick atmosphere of London, the want of which Sir Walter Scott regretted in Paris. I have

even heard some Englishmen, perhaps somewhat subject to *gallomania*, in opposition to Sir Walter's opinion, venture to regret the transparent atmosphere, which in Paris envelopes the great buildings and the approaches to our public gardens with the diaphanous dews of that soft and brilliant fluid which is represented in some of the pictures of Teniers and Constable. Sir Walter might, however, vindicate his love for coal-smoke by the salubrity which London is said to owe to that vapour. According to Dr. Cline, that immense capital is the most healthy city in the world. It is pretended that the exemption of the inhabitants from many of the maladies which afflict great cities, is to be attributed to the sulphurous naphtha, which prevents febrile contagion or retards its progress. To prove this, you are defied to find a wasp about London, because sulphurous emanations destroy that insect. Among the causes of the salubrity of London, we must not forget the Thames, a river subject to the influence of the tide, nor the wide streets and large squares in the newly built quarters of the town, the internal cleanliness of the houses, and the frequent irrigation occasioned by flooding the kennels; for every morning water plugs are opened at different distances in the streets.

As to its general aspect, London is certainly inferior to Paris. There is nothing very magnificent or graceful in any part of London; nothing, which in the eye of a Parisian, equals the imposing Place de Louis XV. or the endless variety of those Boulevards which Lady Morgan

compares to the zone of Venus. The great buildings of London are so badly situated that one is entrapped into a denial of their existence. The streets are composed of brick-houses of a dirty red colour, and in a bad style of architecture; or they rather may be said to belong to no architectural order, and they shock the beholder by their monotonous plainness, or their absurd imitation of Grecian peristyles. Now and then, indeed, you fall in with some of those large places called squares, in the midst of which you are surprised to find a garden, adorned with a fountain or the statue of some great man; but all approach to it is prevented by iron-railings, which cannot be surmounted with impunity. The inhabitants of the surrounding houses enjoy exclusively the right of walking in the garden of the square, which they keep in order at their own expense. The Place Royale gives a better idea of the London squares than any other part of Paris. The public promenades are, St. James's Park, Hyde Park and Kensington gardens, which communicate with each other. I am sometimes tempted to prefer these parks to the gardens of the Luxemburg and the Tuileries, which however, cannot give you any idea of them. St. James's Park, Hyde Park, and Kensington-gardens, are to me the Tuileries, the Champs-Elysées and the Jardin des Plantes united. On Sundays the crowd of carriages, which repair thither, and the gentlemen of fashion, who exhibit their horsemanship with admirable dexterity in the ride, remind me of Long-champs; but hackney-coaches are not allowed to enter here

to destroy the fine spectacle which so many elegant carriages afford. Sheep graze tranquilly in Hyde-Park, where it is also pleasing to see the deer bounding about. At Kensington-gardens you are obliged to leave your horse or carriage standing at the gate. Walking through its shady alleys I observed with pleasure that the fashionable English ladies, pay, in regard to dress, a just tribute to the taste of our fair countrywomen. Judging from the costume of the ladies, you might sometimes fancy yourself walking under the chestnut trees of the Tuileries. A line of Tasso may very well be applied to Kensington-gardens :—

" L'arte che tutto fà, nulla si scuopre."

Though the royal or government palaces are among the most remarkable in London, they serve to show how little the dignity of the sovereign is respected in England in comparison with other countries of Europe. To say nothing of St. James's palace (which the present sovereign has not thought fit for his residence,) there are in Paris many hotels preferable to Carlton-house. This pretended palace is adorned with a Corinthian portico, the elegance of which, at first glance, pleases the eye, but its columns support nothing except the entablature which unites them. On one of these pillars an Italian artist chalked the following lines in the name of Pasquin and Marforio :—

Belle colonne che fate là ?
Io no lo so en verità.

Somerset-house is the only public building which has any pretension to grandeur or magnificence. Its extent, the noble simplicity of its details, and the skill displayed in the design, render it worthy of the largest capital in the world. Strictly speaking, the execution of Somerset-house is more correct than that of St. Paul's, but at the same time the former building displays a certain feebleness of conception which proves that the architect, Sir William Chambers, was but a man of talent; while Sir Christopher Wren was a man of genius. Waterloo bridge is close to Somerset-house, and perhaps no building except the Louvre, could preserve its grandeur beside that master-piece of Rennie! Somerset-house is built of Portland stone. The principal front is raised on arches, and at full tide it seems to rise out of the water like a Venetian palace; but at low water, this front, which is intended to be the most striking part of the building, does not look large enough to correspond with the immense foundation on which it rests. The north front is an elegant and complete piece of architecture; of the nine arches which form its base, and which support a range of Corinthian columns, the three middle ones form the principal entrance, and open into a vestibule, where the busts of Michael Angelo and Newton arrest the attention of the spectator. The central stones of the arches are ornamented by bas reliefs, emblematic of Ocean and the eight principal rivers of England. The shafts of the Corinthian pillars are not fluted; which, I

believe, is contrary to all old established rules. I shall not describe the quadrangle, where there is none of that splendour of detail which it would be presumption to criticise in the court of the Louvre. The present building stands on the site of old Somerset Palace, which was the residence of three queens in succession. Somerset House is chiefly occupied by public offices, but portions of the building are assigned to the Society of Antiquaries, and to the grand annual exhibition of painting and sculpture. By thus crowding clerks and artists together, England sufficiently reveals the scarcity of her public buildings. Perhaps, however, the government offices in England dispense with that host of clerks who with us have nothing to do but to mend pens for our ministers.

There are few gothic structures in London; for almost all the churches were built subsequently to the great fire, and Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of that period, followed the rules of classic models. There is little to criticise in the churches of St. George Hanover-square, St. Martin in the Fields, St. Pancras, St. Mary-le-Bonne, St. Mary-le-Strand, &c.; but these edifices may all be regarded merely as parochial chapels. Each is surrounded by a burial ground. I was at first forcibly struck by the frequent appearance of tomb stones in the midst of a crowded capital: in the retired parts of the town they produced on me a feeling of melancholy, while they had a somewhat revolting effect in the more busy quarters. It may be observed in favour of this ancient

custom, that a serious thought suddenly crossing the mind, amidst the dissipation of the world, sometimes arrests us at the brink of a precipice; and the stone that records the virtues of the righteous dead, cannot too frequently remind the living of an example which is often speedily forgotten.—Perhaps this is speaking like a poet rather than a physician; but the question of salubrity will have its turn in another place.

The most perfect church in London is St. Stephen's, Walbrook, which is the masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren, and a model of elegance. The design is at once original and simple, and nothing can exceed the grace of its airy spire, which transports the imagination of the beholder to the valleys of Greece. But it is mortifying to see the miserable houses which profane this classic temple by the contact of their dirty walls. This disagreeable impression is also produced by the aspect of St. Paul's. The beholder, delighted with the noble character of the edifice, looks in vain for the spacious area in which it ought to stand; but alas! he finds nothing but a crowd of ill built houses, which confine the building, and almost choak up every approach to it. Grace is the principal characteristic of the architecture of St. Paul's cathedral; but it is grace combined with dignity, and that chaste and pure beauty which arises from the admirable symmetry of every part, and the perfection of the details. It also possesses in an eminent degree that grandeur which is alone capable of producing deep and lasting impressions.

I will now enter beneath the majestic dome which rivals that reared by Michael Angelo, having first, however, paid the fee of admission, for in this speculating nation, the curiosity of strangers is turned to profitable account, even in the sanctuary of God. The idea of perfect emptiness in this vast structure seems to have offended the taste even of the Christian iconoclasts of England; and, instead of the images of the saints, which they deprecate as the emblems of papal superstition, they have introduced the idols of paganism. On one tomb Neptune is represented, armed with his trident! I do not mean to blame the English for erecting monuments to their warlike heroes near the altar of the God of Peace, since we have made him also the god of battles; but insipid allegories and mythological common-places, hostile to established faith and popular ideas, are certainly unpardonable in an edifice which, though classical, is nevertheless Christian. Why is this magnificent temple encumbered with the tombs of men who, when living, claimed no distinctions save those which wealth conferred, and whose heirs gratify their vanity by purchasing* from the

* Southey related that on the death of Barry, the painter, it was wished to erect a simple monument to his memory in St. Paul's, and a petition to that effect was addressed to the dean and chapter of the cathedral, who returned for answer, that the honour was taxed at £1000. It was represented that Barry died poor, and that the obscurest corner of the church would be satisfactory. The demand was, in consequence, reduced to £500. Fresh remonstrances ensued, and the chapter taking offence at the negotiation, raised its demand to the original sum of £1000. This circumstance has never been contradicted.

Bishop of London the privilege of interring them beside the departed great! It is gratifying to turn from these monuments of wealth and vain glory, to the epitaph of the architect whose ashes repose at the entrance of the choir, beneath a simple marble tablet, inscribed as follows:—

SUBTUS CONDITUR HUJUS ECCLESIÆ ET URBIS
CONDITOR, CHRISTOPHORUS WREN, QUI VIXIT
ANNOS ULTRA NONAGINTA, NON SIBI SED
BONO PUBLICO. LECTOR SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRAS,
CIRCUMSPICE.

OBIIT XXV. FEB. ÆTATIS XCI.
ANNO MDCCXXIII.

There is certainly something powerfully eloquent in this epitaph; but does it not bear a tinge of human vanity, and is it not at variance with the object to which a Christian church is really dedicated? It may, I admit, be least revolting in a regularly beautiful edifice, which being limited in grandeur by that very regularity, is embraced almost at a glance in all its parts, and is calculated to exhibit the admirable talent of the architect, rather than to inspire sentiments of humility and devotion. Such an epitaph would assuredly never have occurred to the friends of the architect in one of those gothic cathedrals, in which man feels all his importance annihilated amidst the sacred majesty of the place! By its fanciful but sublime proportions, and its half lights and

shades, the Christian church should excite in the mind ideas of eternity, and of the immeasurable distance by which God is concealed from us, even in those places most occupied by his invisible presence. The pagan temple appeals only to the senses, which it too speedily satisfies. Admiration is soon exhausted by its uniform perfection. It is to be regretted that scriptural paintings are not introduced into St. Paul's: they would help to fill up the cold vacuum of the interior, and would clearly denote the object for which the structure is destined.

St. Paul's was originally one of the first Christian churches founded in England. What a contrast must exist between its present magnificence and the aspect it exhibited in those primitive times, when, as an old chronicler observes, churches and chalices were of wood, and priests were of gold!* Some of the dissenting sects, such as the

* It is related that when St. Wulstan saw the demolition of the old and rude edifice of St. Oswald, which was pulled down for the purpose of erecting the cathedral of Worcester in its stead, he could not refrain from shedding tears. Some one said to him, "You ought rather to rejoice in witnessing the enlargement of the church over which you preside." "I am far from thinking," replied Wulstan, "that we sinners have any right to demolish the works of the saints, for the sake of raising above their ruins new monuments for our own glory. In the happy times of those good servants of Christ, the art of building pompous edifices was unknown; but men knew how to sacrifice themselves for God in all sorts of temples, and to convert their fellow-creatures by their pious example. We, on the contrary, neglect the care of souls, while we employ ourselves in piling up heaps of stones."

It was perfectly natural that St. Wulstan should experience these sentiments. The demolition of an edifice sanctified by age and by pious recollections, distressed him, because it reminded him of the

quakers and methodists, seem to wish to restore ecclesiastical architecture to its primitive simplicity. Real churchmen, however, like Southey, begin to regret the want of the statues and pictures of catholicism, and quote the observation made by Erasmus on Canterbury cathedral:—*Tantâ magestate sese erigit in cœlum, ut, procul etiam, intuentibus religionem incutiat.*

Many persons conceive that the English school of painting requires only public encouragement, and they are anxious that the present king should continue the patronage which his father extended to the fine arts in the person of West. They suggest that the recollection of England's triumphs should be immortalized by painters whose works have been deemed worthy to adorn the walls of palaces. Artists are directed to the scriptures as containing an inexhaustible store of subjects for pictures, which would be worthy to be consecrated in churches. Sincere members of the English church are of opinion that protestants should not be deprived of the advantage of appealing to the eyes of the people, and impressing on the youthful imagination thoughts and lessons, which ought to be ever fresh in the recollection. The art of painting not only produces painters: it has created heroes and penitents, saints and martyrs, by its power of exciting laudable emula-

vanity and instability of all the works of man. He could not but think of the changes which the new structure was doomed to undergo, and its inevitable decay, however long it might survive him, his tomb, and perhaps his name.

tion. By extending to the fine arts the national encouragement to which they have an undoubted claim, a salutary impulse is given to virtue and patriotism, as well as to genius.

I shall close this letter by one observation respecting London. The English capital may be said to consist of two towns, one of old date, including the city properly so called, and the other of recent construction, called by way of distinction, the west end, where colonnades and elegant streets are daily multiplying. In the city, amidst old and irregular brick houses, whose shadows cast a gloom over labyrinths of narrow streets, arise the chaste dome of St. Paul's, and the Grecian-like column emphatically called the *Monument*; while the picturesque turrets and spires of Westminster Abbey overlook the more modern buildings in the western part of London. The Monument which helps to produce this contrast, serves to perpetuate an historical calumny against the Roman catholics. Is it necessary for almost periodically decimating Ireland, to maintain in the eyes of the English people an atrocious accusation, which daily denounces to the fury of

ıtion of Christians and brothers?

LETTER IX.

TO M. AUG. SOULIÉ.

I HAVE admired St. Paul's cathedral, were it only for the sake of securing the right of more freely eulogizing Westminster Abbey or St. Peter's Church! What a confession! But am I really obliged to adopt this precaution, before I can venture to prefer a gothic church to a romano-greek temple, when this preference is founded on the indispensable unison between the architecture of a nation, and its climate, religion and origin; when, above all, this preference is wholly independent of the positive merit of each edifice considered merely as a work of art?

St. Paul's is, as a whole, inferior to the cathedrals of Canterbury and York; but the beautiful chapel of Henry VII., which forms an appendage to Westminster Abbey, is undoubtedly the finest monument of gothic architecture extant. Henry VII. expended £14,000 on the erection of the chapel, a sum equivalent to that which he paid for the building of a ship of war. Of the ship, not a single board now remains; all have rotted in the harbours, or have been dispersed by storms. But the chapel still stands, an everlasting monument, or, as a Christian bard might say, a visible symbol of the bark of St. Peter, which neither the

power of hell nor time can reach. Henry VII.'s chapel is not one of those structures dilapidated by age, on which imagination confers a degree of perfection which it never possessed. A modern artist, Mr. Gayfere, has recently restored to this venerable pile all the beauty and freshness which it exhibited three hundred years ago, without destroying the ideal illusion which crowns the old age of religious structures. This chapel, with its elegant turrets and spires, and walls wrought with the delicacy of lace, almost realizes the conception of a fairy palace. The softly shaded interior of the building denotes the object of its destination: it is a mausoleum specially consecrated to royal ashes; for though Westminster Abbey receives within its sanctuary all historical illustrations, it is a mistake to suppose that ranks are there levelled and confounded.

Many French travellers who have visited England, in the excess of their love of equality, have dwelt with singular complacency on this sepulchral Utopia. How often have I heard it affirmed in France, that the honours of Westminster Abbey belong by right to genius as well as to royalty, and that the monument of the poor Grub-street poet rises beside the cenotaph of kings! Struck with the inequality, not only in the situation, but in the forms of the tombs, and seeing in many instances the splendid mausoleum, inscribed with an aristocratic name, proudly overshadowing the simple marble tablet, I could not help thinking of the well known dialogue between the remains of

a man of rank, and those of a beggar who had been interred side by side.

I must confess that after the first pious emotion, which such a place cannot fail to inspire, the bad taste of some of the statues, and the very unchristian-like physiognomy of our *Cicerone*, gradually inclined me to a less poetic train of reflection, when, on visiting the tomb of Charles II. I was astonished to find myself standing beside that great writer, of whose works it has been justly said that each was a battle gained in favour of the Bourbons; that august race, who, driven from France by revolutionary fury; as the Stuarts were banished from Great Britain, had, like the latter, well nigh left their ashes in a foreign land.

Many of my countrymen will doubtless envy me, for having visited in such company the tombs of immortal kings, heroes, prelates, statesmen, and poets, whose images silently resting on their monuments, attest the succession of twelve centuries of events, most of them connected with the annals of our old monarchy. By a very natural transition, my imagination almost immediately transported me to the royal catacombs of Saint-Denis, the profanation of which has been so eloquently deplored by the illustrious author of the *Genie du Christianisme*, who, during the republic, was the first to invoke the legitimacy of the tombs of our kings, as during the empire, he first invoked the legitimacy of their thrones. The last asylum of the sovereigns of England has not been violated; but though Cromwell did not long enjoy the honours

of royal interment, the place which the rightful successor of Charles II. ought to occupy beside his brother, is usurped by a monarch who was not a Stuart. Oh! temple of Saint-Denis! if the ashes of a new race of Bourbons should ever repose in the solitude of thy funereal sanctuary, thou wilt be chiefly indebted for the honour to him who, having pronounced an anathema on thy profaners, has, by his writings, once more familiarized France with monarchical doctrines. By a second revolution, the ashes of the enemies of kings have been deposited in the sacred vaults of Westminster; but it may be presumed that the Stuarts would still have retained possession of their throne and their sepulchre; had the only great poet of Charles the second's reign devoted his genius to the cause of the restoration! But alas! the English Homer was the apologist of regicides, and Cromwell's secretary!

There is a species of profanation existing in Westminster Abbey, as well as in St. Paul's cathedral, which arises from the vanity of those who purchase the right of erecting in the British Pantheon, monuments whose bad taste and arrogance I have just condemned. Even the pure whiteness of these new marbles, presents a very disagreeable contrast with the venerable hue of antiquity diffused over this noble structure, and would of itself form a sufficient objection to them; but the incongruity is rendered the more intolerable by the frequency of its occurrence. One of these monuments is greatly admired by the English on

account of the skilful execution of its sculpture, the subject of which, however, is a very ungraceful and unpoetic allegory. It is the production of a Frenchman, the celebrated Roubillac. The artist's idea was to pourtray Lady Nightingale, whom her husband is endeavouring to rescue from the grasp of death. The grim king of terrors is represented by a skeleton, the details of whose anatomy the sculptor has copied with hideous precision. On viewing this monument, M. de Chateaubriand must have been reminded of the remark he himself makes in his chapter on sculpture; "this ill accords with the spirit of Christianity which presents death under so fair an aspect to the righteous."

I heard the illustrious writer also express his indignation at the clumsiness with which some of the old sculptured ornaments in the interior of Westminster Abbey have been repaired; but were I to attempt to report either his censure or his praise, I fear I should only prove my own unworthiness for such a task. When we came to Poet's Corner, the name given to that part of the building which is devoted to the monuments of great writers, I was prepared to listen most attentively to the noble representative of our modern literature; but on turning round I found that I had lost sight of M. de Chateaubriand. He had lingered a few paces; and I dare say before I met him he had already visited the sanctuary, where a niche would have been prepared for him beside that of the author of Paradise Lost, had the *Mar-*

tyrs been written in the language of Milton. On returning from this part of the Abbey, I recognised, by the mere initials of their names, the spot containing the ashes of those two rival statesmen, who, after mutually contending for power during their lives, now peaceably share one vault, and almost one tomb, amidst the close ranks of the departed great. But it is impossible to refrain from smiling at the sight of a great queen standing bolt upright, in a sort of case, like the wives of the Pharaohs, with this difference, however, that Elizabeth, whose jealous and tyrannical coquetry is imprinted in her countenance, is represented not as death has made her, but arrayed in the robes of royalty. The dress instantly enables one to recognise the petticoated Louis XIV. of England, without the minute examination of the features, to which the Cicerone who conducts the visitors, invites them, by opening the case in which her Majesty is enclosed, with a familiarity which would have mightily offended the virgin queen. I must, however, inform you that I am not alluding to an embalmed body, but to a wax image of Elizabeth. The fixed look of the countenance is truly frightful, and seems to express a feeling of indignation at being summoned before posterity with so many wrinkles. Elizabeth is not the only royal personage who is thus moulded in wax and exhibited in the Abbey. There are other cases containing King William, Queen Anne, &c. A wax image is also shown of a hero of more modern date, namely Lord Nelson, who is represented with his

mutilated arm, and dressed in a dirty naval uniform. I cannot express to you how ridiculous it is to see the exhibition of our Curtius thus transported to the vaults of Westminster Abbey. The very bill of the entertainment is not omitted; and a board hung up at the door, states the price of admittance.

LETTER X.

TO M———

BEFORE I give you an account of the British Museum, I beg that you will banish all idea of a comparison with our Louvre, which the title of Museum naturally excites. The British Museum is a public, or, if you chuse, a royal and national establishment, for it is placed under the immediate direction of the government, by which it is maintained. It combines the advantages of a collection of animals and minerals, with a gallery of sculpture. The visitor is allowed to contemplate these valuable stores at his leisure; but I cannot conceive by what strange abuse of words the library of this establishment is called public, when the dusty backs of a collection of folios are all that the public are permitted to see. The books of a

national library, more than any others, are intended to be read. I shall perhaps take another opportunity of describing the zoological and ornithological treasures of London, and at present consider the British Museum merely as the sanctuary in which the last mutilated gods of Greece have found an asylum, or, as some will have it, a prison; for the author of Childe Harold is not the only one who has attacked Lord Elgin on this subject. I must confess that when I first beheld, under the gloomy sky of Great Britain, those spoils of unhappy Greece, and among others the Caryatis of the Pandroseum, I could very willingly have repeated the imprecations which Lord Byron puts into the mouth of Minerva. I recollected the grief of the Disdar of Athens when he saw the clumsy workmen of the Scottish lord break one of the metopes of the Parthenon: he took his pipe from his mouth, dropped a tear, and cast a supplicating look on *il Signor Lusieri.*

The grief of Athens on being deprived of her treasures, even extended, if we may believe the poets, to the lifeless marble. The little temple of the Pandrosium was still in good preservation, and as the story goes, the five sisters of the Caryatis, now held captives in the British Museum, shed tears, and uttered a cry of lamentation in the middle of the night.

But, without having recourse to Lord Elgin's defence, is it not natural, at sight of these ruins, to consider the question under another point of view? Regarding these fragments as the only existing

testimonies of the glory of Phidias, can it be denied that Lord Elgin has the merit of having saved them from utter destruction? How could the Greeks, like Micah, claim the idols of their forefathers, when they had ceased to defend them against barbarians? Let the poet and the lover of art heap all their imprecations on the heads of Omar's descendants, who, like the incendiary by whom the treasures of Alexandria were destroyed, find no text in the Koran in favour of the productions of genius.

It is impossible to be otherwise than deeply affected in the presence of these marbles, which, outliving the gods whose attributes they were, are still, after the mutilations of fifteen centuries, the objects of enthusiastic admiration to every artist and friend of the Muses. Grecian sculpture arose under the chisel of Phidias, and grew to a perfection which his successors have despaired of attaining. Rome celebrated her triumphs and adorned her temples with the statues of Greece. The mistress of the world may have possessed a Homer in her Virgil, a Herodotus in her Livy, a Pindar in her Horace, a Menander in her Terence, and a Demosthenes in her Cicero, but she could never boast a Phidias: and since modern Italy gave birth to Christian sculptors, from Michel Angelo up to the great Canova, Phidias has always been the master.

The sculptures of the British Museum, in their present state, are intelligible only to the eyes of the sculptor and the painter. The mass of ob-

servers view them only as shapeless fragments of stone, while the imagination of the artist fills up the parts which time has destroyed. When the question of voting a sum of money for the purchase of the Elgin gallery was discussed in Parliament, the opinions of eminent artists respecting these spoils of the temple of Minerva were collected together. It is curious to compare the manner in which each expresses his admiration.

Mr. West, then president of the Royal Academy, declared, that if he had seen those emanations of genius in his youth, the feeling he entertained of their perfection would have animated all his labours, and would have led him to infuse more character, expression, and life into his historical compositions.

The present president, Sir Thomas Laurence, expressed his opinion that the statues brought to England by Lord Elgin were superior to the Apollo, because he conceived that they unite beauty of composition and grandeur of form with a more perfect and correct imitation of Nature than is to be found in the Apollo. He particularly admired, in the Elgin marbles, the correct representation of that harmonious variety produced in the human form by the alternate repose and motion of the muscles.

Canova declared that Lord Elgin deserved to have altars raised to him as the saviour of the arts, and considered himself fortunate in having visited London, were it only for the opportunity of seeing those master-pieces.

In the opinion of Mr. Nollekins, the Theseus is only equal to the Apollo. Flaxman and Chantry were not quite so decided as to the object of their preference; while Westmacott and Rossi declared they knew of nothing superior to these admirable fragments.

This united expression of admiration and applause was interrupted only by the discordant voice of an amateur, like the harsh cry of a gosling disturbing the melody of the swans.

Mr. Payne Knight regarded these statues merely as copies executed by students in the age of Adrian, and tortured certain expressions of Plutarch to prove that Lord Elgin and the Royal Academy had been imposed upon. But his opinions were scouted; and it was suspected that his affected contempt proceeded from feelings of jealousy; for such has hitherto been the poverty of the national galleries of England, or so valuable are the stores of private collections, that Mr. Payne Knight began to fear lest the importance of his cabinet of antiquities might be diminished by the Athenian sculptures. This trait seems to me characteristic of the vanity of English amateurs in general. Unluckily for Mr. Payne Knight an anecdote was related of him, which strongly reminds one of the excellent trick played by Edie Ochiltree on the Laird of Monkbarns. Some years previously, Mr. Knight had purchased an antique cameo representing Flora. For this he paid £250, the sum at which he estimated the horse's head in the Elgin gallery, a precious mo-

nument of art, and the object which I must confess most forcibly struck me when I visited the collection in the British Museum. As long as the dominion of Bonaparte interrupted the communication between England and the continent, Mr. Knight's Flora was regarded as authentic; but on the establishment of peace, an Italian artist, Signor Petrucci, came to England, and discovered that the pretended cameo was a modern production. This Mr. Knight denied; but Petrucci persisted in his assertion; and the amateur became furiously indignant. At length Petrucci was forced, in self-defence, to confess what he has since attested on oath before a magistrate, that he himself executed the *antique cameo*, which he sold for the sum of twenty scudi to Signor Borelli, of whom Mr. Payne Knight had been lucky enough to purchase it for £250.

Among the Greeks, with whom there existed a close connection between the productions of sculpture and architecture, the Elgin marbles were held as an integral part of the Parthenon; and they furnish models of the three great classes of ancient sculpture, in the statues of the pediments, the alto-relievos of the metopes, and the basso-relievos of the frize.

One of the pediments represented the birth of Minerva, and the other her dispute with Neptune. The figure to which the name of Theseus has been assigned, is, in M. Visconti's opinion, a Hercules. It is a young god reclining on one of the rocks of Olympus, over which a lion's skin and

an ample drapery is thrown. Visconti also asserts that the Neptune is the river god Ilissus, likewise recumbent, but in the act of raising himself in a transport of joy, caused by the victory of Minerva. The manner in which the effect of a spontaneous motion is given to this figure is a triumphant example of the power of art. The fragments of these two deities, together with the horse's head, are the most valuable specimens of statuary, properly so called, brought from the Parthenon.

The British Museum is also indebted to Lord Elgin for fifteen of the metopes which, alternately with the triglyphs, adorned the entablature, by which the whole colonnade was surmounted.—Phidias had represented on them the battle of the Lapithæ and the Centaurs, a subject which was considered as national, since Theseus, at the head of a body of Athenians, had decided the victory in favour of the Lapithæ. These fragments are remarkable for correctness of design, though their execution is unequal. Phidias was probably assisted by one of his pupils in these, as well as in the magnificent and almost marvellous basso-relievo of the frize of the Cella, in which the ceremony of the great Panathenœa is represented with such powerful poetic effect. It is impossible to avoid a momentary illusion on beholding the procession of this festival, instituted in honour of the tutelary goddess of Athens. The spectator experiences that kind of emotion which the imposing spectacle of consecrated rights naturally produces; and if, notwithstanding the difference of

faith, he cannot entirely escape the magic influence of art, within the walls of a museum, can we wonder at the excitement experienced by a Chateaubriand and a Byron when contemplating the divine relics beneath the pure sky of the land which gave them birth?

The Phigalian marbles represented the same subjects as those of the Parthenon, and though inferior to them, they form, notwithstanding, an interesting appendage to the Elgin collection. It would require the space of a large volume to examine all these antiquities, and to compare the different specimens of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian sculpture in the British Museum: and besides, such an undertaking would carry me in some measure out of England. I prefer taking a rapid survey of the public buildings of London, to look for specimens of English sculpture, and to see in what manner it has contributed to adorn the British metropolis. I must not, however, quit the Museum without remarking, that the building itself offers a tribute to French art, being the work of Puget, of Marseilles, who was sent for by Lord Montague to superintend its construction.

Statues in the open air are not very common in London. Usurpation has respected all those erected to the memory of the Stuarts, which, if I were king of England, of the House of Hanover, would make me tremble, by reminding me that, (as Junius expresses it) since a Revolution gave my family the throne, a Revolution may also deprive me of it. The English sculptors, it is

true, have, like the French, generally disguised historical personages by what I should call anachronisms in costume. Thus we see the Charleses and the Jameses clothed in the Roman toga, and the royal perriwigs are disregarded; an omission very creditable to the taste of the artists. In our busts and statues of Louis XIV. the wig usually encircles the brow of the *grand monarque*.

There is, however, nothing offensive in the figure of Charles Fox, represented in a consular robe, in Bloomsbury-square; for there was a certain degree of Roman eloquence in the Parliamentary speeches of that leader of the opposition. He is represented seated, with his right arm extended and supporting Magna Charta. His name forms the only inscription on the pedestal. The countenance is said to present a striking resemblance to that of the distinguished statesman. The attitude is dignified and the statue, upon the whole, reflects great credit on the talent of Westmacott. In Russel-square, in a situation facing the monument of Fox, there is another statue, which also calls to mind one of those illustrious statesmen of ancient Rome, whose time was divided between the labours of the senate and the care of their Sabine farms. This statue represents the late Duke of Bedford, with one hand resting on a plough, and in the other holding some ears of corn. There are four emblematic figures of the Seasons at the pedestal of the monument, which is adorned with various rural attributes, in bas-relief.

I shall take another opportunity of speaking of Westmacott and his rivals in sculpture.

LETTER XI.

TO M. C. NODIER.

My dear Charles,

Though rich in architecture, England has been obliged to acknowledge the still greater riches and comparative superiority of France in edifices of every style; but she has addressed to us a reproach which we may repeat without blushing, since your magnificent work has developed to us the poetry of our religious and historical monuments.

The English have said that they renounce the honour which has sometimes been claimed for them, of having been the inventors of the gothic architecture; but, it is affirmed that the English alone seek to preserve the monuments of Normandy, which have been doomed to destruction by the shameful and ignorant apathy of the French. It is observed that the English topographers, who, indeed, are for the most part a wretched class of writers, could never have risen up except among a people fondly attached to their native soil, and to every thing connected with their history. In France, on the contrary, all that revives the recollections of old times is regarded with indifference,

or even with hatred. In the opinion of the English, no work having for its object the celebration of the national edifices of France, would meet with success; and it is asserted that the task of describing the antiquities of France has devolved on the English. "We have not," they say, "either conceived or executed those noble pledges of the piety and magnificence of past ages; but while the inhabitants of the soil to which they belong, remain insensible to their beauty, we make them English property, as we have already done by the Alhambra and the Parthenon, the temples of Elora, and the sepulchres of Thebes, the mosques of Delhi, and the ruins of Palmyra."

Such is the disgrace to which France may be exposed by the negligence of the ministers of his most Christian Majesty! Such are the consequences of consigning to government the task of erecting and preserving public monuments! The statues of Richard Cœur de Lion, and other kings of the race of the Plantagenets, remained buried in France near a well, and daily exposed to mutilation. Can it be true that an English artist, Mr. Stothard, was the first to call the attention of the minister of the interior to these outrages, and to solicit permission, in the name of his countrymen, to transport to the royal tombs of Westminster Abbey, the sacred monuments which were thus shamefully neglected? Is the French territory no longer worthy to contain the glorious depository of the ashes of the brave? Did it remain for Mr. Stothard to discover and restore to the tomb the head and the statue of

Clisson, the companion in arms of Dugueselin? But at length Taylor, de Cailleux, and you my dear ffiend, have raised your voices, and have already expelled the mercenary *bande-noir* from several of our sacred temples. Thanks to your brilliant lithographic drawings and picturesque descriptions, we no longer regard as useless masses of stones, the architectural monuments which impart a moral physiognomy to our soil, and which, blending with beautiful landscape scenery, present the noblest combination of the works of nature and the productions of human genius.

In England, as in France, the epithet gothic became a term of contempt, while the rage prevailed for the almost exclusive imitations of Greek architecture. The people still respectfully kneeled down in the basilicks of their forefathers; but artists and amateurs despised those edifices, which display at once magnificence and grace. Conceding all their admirations to the most indifferent imitators of the classic style, they became incapable of appreciating the fertility of imagination, the knowledge of human passions, and the genius required for the construction of those buildings whose splendour, ingenious mechanism, arches, tombs, painted windows, and well contrived lights, shadows, and perspective effects, excite sentiments of almost romantic piety. A classic traveller who, on his return from Athens, inspired with just admiration for all that he had seen in that cradle of the fine arts, but cherishing unjust contempt for all that was not the work of

Phidias, happened to visit the church of St. Ouen in the capital of Normandy. The imposing grandeur of the structure immediately filled him with religious veneration; but he nevertheless attempted to account for the sentiments he experienced by the strict application of the rules of ancient art. As if to justify his forced impartiality, he extolled the basilick of Rouen as a master-piece of symmetry, which proved, he said, that the architect, availing himself of former models, evinced exquisite judgment, combined with original genius and imagination.

In England the admirable talent of Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren completely failed when they attempted the gothic style.

The Saxons brought rude imitations of Roman architecture from Italy to England. The Romans imparted a degree of grandeur, dignity, and even grace to the edifices which were built or repaired by them: Durham cathedral is one of these. But it was not until the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries that France furnished England with great models of gothic architecture. The Roman temples also produced an influence on the taste of some of the English architects of those ages.

Falaise, the birth-place of William the Conqueror, seems to have furnished a model for most of the fortified castles of England. The style of the Tudors, as it is called, which was at first applied to private houses, and then to public edifices, is but a copy of the modification to which French

architecture was subjected under the princes of the house of Burgundy. Unfortunately the less durable traces of civil and domestic architecture rapidly decayed. The houses of the time of Charles I. have almost all disappeared in consequence of the repairs demanded by luxury or decay.

In ecclesiastical architecture, one of the differences between the French style, properly so called, and the Anglo-Norman style, consists in the circular windows, which, in the French churches are larger and more numerous than in England, where they are to be found only in Westminster Abbey, and in the cathedrals of Canterbury, Chichester, Litchfield, and York.

In spite of the religious reformers of the reign of Henry VIII., whose iconoclastic fanaticism proved as destructive as jacobinism and the *bande-noir* in France, England has preserved the successive gradation of the three models of Christian architecture, from the primitive gothic, which is found in the simple cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral, to the florid gothic, of which Henry VII.'s chapel is the master-piece. Between these two orders * must be ranked the pure gothic, of which Bristol and York cathedrals are specimens: the latter, indeed, for chaste and simple grace, may be regarded as truly classic. Upon the whole, our French cathedrals and churches exhibit a greater

* *Styles* would perhaps be the more correct term, as the word *order* merely denotes the difference of columns and capitals.

degree of magnificence, considered with reference to their general aspect; but the English are mistaken in supposing that theirs excel in elegance of detail.

The earliest specimens of ecclesiastical architecture belong to the clergy themselves, who were the guardians of the fine arts in the ages of barbarism. The first Christian architects were bishops and abbots. The canon, Elias of Berham, built Salisbury Cathedral; bishop William Wykenham erected the Cathedral of Winchester, and also superintended the building of Windsor Castle. When Henry VIII. invited a crowd of Italian artists to his court, they claimed the property of the fine arts as their transmitted inheritance, and for a time possessed a monopoly over architecture and sculpture; but when they themselves became partly converted to the taste of the *barbarians*, they introduced an absurd mixture of the gothic and classic styles, and destroyed the noble simplicity of the regular columns. Holbein himself was led into this whimsical corruption, as was also John of Padua; and in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, it would have been difficult to banish from palaces and churches a pedantic style of ornament, which was perfectly in unison with the style of the court. At length, in the reign of Charles I., Inigo Jones appeared, and erected Whitehall. This artist was worthy to have inhaled the classic air of Italy, and to have been the pupil of Vitruvius and Palladio. Charles was a lover of the arts; and there was a certain degree of French

taste in all the entertainments of his elegant court. Inigo Jones designed the scenery and decorations for the performance of Ben Jonson's masques; but the genius of the English Palladio is immortalized by the banqueting-house at Whitehall, Greenwich Hospital, and the Exchange. When the revolutionary storm, and the despotism of Cromwell, were at an end,—when the Stuarts, to use the expression of an English writer, brought from France *a wretched imitation of the theatrical pomp of Versailles*, to that *wretched imitation* our disdainful neighbours were indebted for their fine classic cathedral of St. Paul's, their spacious palace of Hampton-court, their magnificent hospital at Greenwich, and the Monument of London. Walpole observes, that *unfortunately* the great architect of that period travelled only in France; —a sad misfortune truly! Vanbrugh inherited the celebrity of Wren, but not his talent; of this Blenheim is a striking proof. Hawksmoor and Gibbs, who were pupils of Wren, followed the precepts of their master, but were merely cold copyists. There was a total want of grace and imagination in the works of the English architects until the reign of George II., when Lord Burlington exercised over the artists of his time the powerful influence of his patronage and his taste. Burlington House, which was built by his father, was adorned by the son with a new front and a colonnade, presenting an imposing effect. Horace Walpole mentions, that he had heard nothing of the improvements which Burlington House had

undergone, when he was invited to a ball there on his return from Italy. On entering the gates at night he did not perceive the change; but at day-break he happened to look out at one of the windows to see the sun rise, and the colonnade appeared before him like a vision. It resembled, he says, one of those structures which we read of in fairy tales, and which the genii are described as raising by the power of enchantment. With all due submission to Horace Walpole, I cannot help thinking that the colonnade would not have produced so powerful an impression on him in a capital where he might have admired, I will not say the colonnade of the Louvre, but the Hôtel des Monnaies or the Garde Meuble. Be this as it may, Burlington House, which was then a detached building, now stands in the centre of one of the busiest streets in London, and seems to blush for the structures by which it is at present surrounded. The front of the house is concealed behind a brick wall. In the neighbourhood of Burlington House an arcade has recently been made, which eclipses both the passage De Lorme and the passage Des Panoramas. Lord Burlington's villa at Chiswick is said to resemble the Villa-Capra near Vicenza, which was built by Palladio. His Lordship was munificent as an English Crœsus, and enlightened as a nobleman of Florence, during its most flourishing period. He was the friend of Pope and the patron of Kent.

Horace Walpole wished to revive the feudal

architecture in his castle at Strawberry Hill. Since Walpole's time, the merit of the gothic style has not been disputed; and in the construction of houses, castles, and churches, the models of the middle ages, and those of Palladio and Wren, have been indifferently adopted. There is certainly a sort of luxury of colonnades in London; and several artists, since the time of Wren, have proved themselves capable of executing the finest ornaments of gothic architecture. Mr. Gayfere has recently repaired Henry VII.'s Chapel and the front of Westminster Hall, in a manner worthy of the days of Edward III. and Edward IV. The new church at Chelsea is happily designed, and in the western part of London there are several churches, which I will not condemn for being rather like Greek than Christian temples, because they are in unison with the magnificent houses by which they are surrounded. The wrecks of the Parthenon are already producing their fruits.

These are general reflections rather than particular descriptions. I will endeavour to enter more fully into details; but the *Foreigner's Guide* will always be more minute than I can be, and I dare not promise to copy it in describing the solemn grandeur of Westminster Abbey, York Cathedral, &c.

Architecture and sculpture are so frequently combined together, that it is almost to be regretted that the professions of the architect and the statuary, depending as they do on each other, are not

exercised by the same artist. We see the grand results which this combination produced in the time of Phidias, and in the golden age of the fine arts in Italy; but I am not surprised that prejudiced persons should affirm that gothic architecture tended to corrupt sculpture in its connection with that art. Grotesque images, it is true, frequently form the ornaments of Christian churches. Few of these accessories would be worthy to be brought in contact with the entablature and metopes of the Parthenon; but it is a mistake to suppose that gothic niches and frizes are ill suited to the introduction of correctly executed statues. Michael Angelo's Moses, Conston's St. Denis, and Girardon's Mater Dolorosa and Eight Apostles, are perfectly well adapted to the niches of our chapels and churches. Let our sculptors endeavour to imitate the models of antiquity, but in so doing they must endeavour to lose sight of national traditions respecting costume, so as to avoid falling into absurd anomalies and anachronisms in their images and emblematic representations. The early ages of christianity gave birth to singular productions of this kind, when pious chroniclers seemed anxious to preach the gospel in the very heaven of paganism. Venus then became *St. Venus*, and her son, undergoing a metamorphosis which Ovid never dreamed of, mounted the pulpit and preached under the title of the *Curate Cupid*. But do the classic sculptors of this enlightened age evince any better taste when Neptune is made to weep over the

cenotaph of a christian admiral? Of all the fine arts, sculpture comes most home to the feelings and tastes of the mass of mankind, and therefore artists should as much as possible avoid allegories foreign to the manners, usages, and worship of the nation to which their works are particularly addressed. It is related that on seeing Nelson's monument at Guildhall, a child who had formed a grand idea of the conqueror of the Nile, enquired, pointing to the statue of Neptune, whether that was the figure of the celebrated Admiral, never supposing that the hero's bust occupied only a secondary place in a medallion on the mausoleum. This very natural incident was not, it is said, lost upon Chantry, who happened to be present, and whose genius has not sacrificed to the false gods.

The earliest productions of English sculpture are to be found on funeral monuments; but the warriors kneeling in cloisters, and the holy prelates in the attitude of benediction or prayer, are merely specimens of the somewhat monotonous invention of the monkish artists. Works of a superior kind were however produced by a Frenchman named Hubert Le Sueur, who was the pupil of Jean de Boulogne, and by an Italian named Francesco Fanelli, who lived in the reign of Charles I. That prince lent a ready ear to the opinions and suggestions of Lord Arundel, the enlightened friend of art. The reign of Charles II. produced Gibbons, who was particu-

larly celebrated for carving in wood, and Cibber, who sculptured the two famous figures of madness which stand in the hall of Bedlam Hospital, and whose truth to nature is so truly horrible, that curtains are drawn before them.

In the reign of King William, John Bushnell was much admired. He executed the statues of the two Charleses at the Exchange, and the two Kings at Temple-bar. Bushnell's conceptions were rather whimsical than happy, and he appears to have been constantly striving to accomplish wonders. For his posthumous fame, he is chiefly indebted to his attempt at realizing the famous Trojan horse. The head alone of Bushnell's horse was capable of containing ten or twelve men seated at table. This stupendous work was destroyed in a hurricane. Had Bushnell lived in our time, he would have been worthy to finish the famous elephant of the Faubourg Saint Antoine.

In the reign of George II. France and Flanders furnished England with two distinguished sculptors, namely, Roubillac of Lyons, and Rysbrac of Antwerp. Roubillac, who was a pupil of Coustou, possessed more imagination and elegance than his Flemish rival; but the chisel of the latter was remarkable for decision and energy. In the execution of his Hercules, Rysbrac copied the athletic forms of famous English boxers, as the Greek sculptors studied the figures and attitudes of the candidates in the olympic games;

but apparently none of the pugilistic heroes of the time could furnish Rysbrac with the model for the head of a god, since he was reduced to the necessity of copying that of the Farnese-Hercules. Roubillac has imparted classic grace to his statue of eloquence; but in his endeavour to confer elegance on Sir Isaac Newton, he has almost given the philosopher the air of a coxcomb.

Scheemaker and Wilton, who were contemporary with several artists still living, materially contributed to the progress of sculpture. Probably in an age and country, in which a great monarch and a great people would have employed these two artists in the execution of national monuments, they might have prepared England for the just appreciation of the relics of ancient Greece. But Scheemaker and Wilton, like their predecessors and immediate successors, laboured only for the limited sphere of private vanity, and frequently disgraced their talent by the execution of the absurd emblems and allegories prescribed by their patrons. This reproach may also be addressed to Bacon, Banks, and Nollekins, and in some instances to Flaxman and Westmacott. But I must devote one or two letters exclusively to the living artists of England.

LETTER XII.

TO M. F———.

YOUR kind letter procured me a very agreeable introduction to Lady F———. Her brother, Sir William, has shewn me great attention, and I readily accepted his offer to accompany me to see the painting and sculpture at Somerset House. I had already paid a visit to the exhibition, but I nevertheless gladly availed myself of the opportunity of hearing the criticisms of a gentleman who is intimate with the principal litterati and artists of Edinburgh and London, and who I suspect is a contributor to one of the principal reviews.

Having paid our shilling at the door, and purchased the catalogue, which contains a list of the pictures and statues exhibited, together with the names of the artists, we first entered the sculpture room, which is on the ground floor. Sir William pointed out to me a groupe representing the archangel Michael overcoming Satan. "This," said he, "is the production of Flaxman, our professor of sculpture." I could not help remarking, "that I hoped for the honour of Flaxman, both as an artist and professor, that he was capable of presenting something better to the students of the Academy, for I could perceive no traces of a

master's hand in this production, which appeared to me almost wholly devoid of grace and beauty."*

After a hasty glance at some other works of indifferent merit, we stopped to examine a subject, borrowed from Milton, *Eve at the brink of the lake.*

> I laid me down
> On the green bank to look into the clear
> Smooth lake, that to me seem'd another sky.
> As I bent down to look, just opposite, a shape
> Within the watery gleam appeared
> Bending to look at me; I started back, &c.

This subject has been treated by two different artists. The first, Mr. Rossi, who is a Royal Academician, seems to have translated Milton after the manner of the Abbé Delille, that is to say, by substituting dazzling style and insipid ornament for the dignified and nervous simplicity of the English bard.† To represent *the smooth clear lake*, he has placed a mirror at the feet of Eve. This whimsical conception fortunately does

* I have since seen some of Flaxman's works, which induce me to form a higher opinion of his talent.

† The following is Delille's translation of the passage above quoted, which seems calculated to refute the opinion I have just expressed. That opinion is, however, founded on the consideration of the work as a whole:—

> De ces bords enchanteurs, sur cette plaine humide
> Je hazarde un regard ignorant et timide.
> O prodige! mon œil y retrouve les cieux,
> Une image flottante y vient frapper mes yeux;
> Pour mieux l'examiner sur elle je m'meline,
> Et l'image à son tour s'avance et m'examine,
> Je tressaile et recule. A l'instant je la voi
> S'effrayer, tressaillir, reculer comme moi.

not destroy the effect of Bayley's Eve. There is a charming air of natural grace in the attitude, and the smile of the countenance well expresses the innocent joys of Eden.

It cost me an effort to avert my eyes from this poetic creation; but there is another statue in the same room which disputes the palm of superiority. This latter is the production of Westmacott, and represents Psyche opening the fatal box given her by Venus.* For delicacy and elegance this statue will bear a comparison with classic models. Grace is, indeed, the peculiar characteristic of Westmacott. But the box is no less fatal to the artist than it was to Psyche. Following the bad taste, which was introduced by a great master of the present day, Westmacott has placed in the hands of his Psyche a box of gilt ivory, and this destroys all the harmony and correctness of a production which otherwise would, perhaps, deserve to be pronounced faultless. "That box," said Sir William, "degrades Psyche to a level with those images which are placed on chimney-pieces to serve as candelabra."

"Let us examine some of Chantry's works," said I: "Where are they placed? I see nothing here but busts and indifferent statues. Some of the busts are doubtless exceedingly beautiful; but these are in sculpture like portraits in comparison

* As the mention of the box may lead some to question my classic knowledge, I beg leave to state that the statue here alluded to is really intended for Psyche, and not for Pandora.

with grand historical pictures. Every bust should have a name inscribed on its pedestal."

"Alas!" replied Sir William, "you see in this room our whole collection of sculpture, and you will here find the only production which Chantry has thought fit to exhibit this year."

"There is one of his works," said I, pointing to the bust of his present majesty. I guessed right. Chantry has ably imparted to the marble the air of dignity which characterizes the head of George IV.; and the bust presents an accurate likeness of the sovereign, who is still the first gentleman, and was once the handsomest man in his dominions! But such is the irresistible influence of a first impression, that I did not feel all the respect which the contemplation of this fine head, and the talent of Chantry, were naturally calculated to inspire. Sir Astley Cooper had that very morning been conversing with me about a wen, which he has recently extracted from the king's head; and to me this idea destroyed all the poetic effect of Chantry's admirable production.

I could not help confessing that I should have very much preferred seeing the bust of Sir Walter Scott, a cast from which I had already seen and admired. Charles Nodier saw this bust last year, and I repeated to Sir William the passage in which it is described in the *Journey from Dieppe to the Highlands of Scotland.**

* The bust of Sir Walter Scott, says M. Nodier, is particularly remarkable. It represents the countenance of that celebrated man as I pictured it from his works, full of penetration, shrewdness and energy.

"Never was a more just eulogium pronounced on the sculptor and the poet," said Sir William. "M. Nodier should have seen our exhibition of 1815, in which Chantry's two sleeping children were placed between the Terpsychore and Hebe of Canova. You will see them at Lichfield, and you will then understand how the two goddesses obtained so few admirers, when stationed beside that master piece of Chantry's skill. I saw a mother bending over the lovely groupe, with her eyes bathed in tears. The two children are represented slumbering in each other's arms, and some flowers which the younger one is supposed to have been gathering, are falling from her hand. Never was the repose of infant beauty and innocence so happily expressed."

The native land of Canova has so long been united with the destiny of France, and the modern Phidias has so often exercised his chisel on the trophies of our glory, and the ornaments of our palaces and museums, that we have in some measure adopted him, forgetting, in our admiration of his genius, that at the period of our reverses he was one of the servile instruments of the conquerors, who stripped us of our treasures of art. This was the first time I had heard the name of Chantry pronounced in connection with that of

It expresses all the vigour necessary for rising to the highest conceptions of human character; and all the wit, taste and philosophic spirit, requisite for sportively and lavishly dispensing the resources of genius: it is, in short, a mixture of Corneille and Moliére, Swift and Milton. Chantry's Sir Walter Scott has the forehead of Homer and the mouth of Rabelais. The likeness must be striking.

Canova; yet I ventured to enquire whether the celebrated English sculptor was even comparable to Thorwaldsen. I had on the preceding day admired a Hebe by Thorwaldsen, at the house of Mr. Boddington, of whose hospitality I shall hereafter have occasion to speak. Sir William did not shrink from the comparison:

"You will, I know," said he, "feel a difficulty in acknowledging the full merit of Chantry, because you come from France impressed with the idea that England is incapable of producing either a great sculptor or a great painter. Yesterday, at my sister's, you declared that we were eternally excluded from the temple of the fine arts; and yet you confess that our northern atmosphere has in all ages been favourable to poetic genius. Now let me explain to you the system of our English prejudice. We assert that your sculptors did not deserve the rich treasures which conquest first gave you, and then took from you." I here interrupted Sir William, and proudly mentioned the names of ——. Sir William interrupted me in his turn. "Mention no names," continued he. "Like a true Englishman, I will stick to my opinions. I intend to criticise your artists collectively; do not lead me into personalities. France has profited but little by the admirable models of which Bonaparte's ambition deprived the rest of Europe. The vanity and pride of the upstart dynasty certainly favoured sculpture. Yet in spite of that thirst of glory which, in France, might be said to be the malady of the age, have you produced any monu-

ment which deserves to be transmitted to posterity? The French seem incapable of understanding the repose and grandeur of the antique statues; they are only capable of representing grace and elegance. Instead of the dignity of a well formed woman, they copy the demure gravity of their tragic queens; and their goddesses and nymphs are merely opera dancers.

"Before Chantry appeared, our English sculptors, I must confess, too much neglected nature; they fell into the error of supposing that ideal beauty consisted in absurd personifications and obscure allegories. That which is not in nature cannot belong to art. Ideal beauty is merely the happy selection of all that is most perfect in nature, the only model which art should endeavour to imitate. Our poetry, our philosophy, and our actions, are the expression of our national character, and are stamped with its energy, boldness, and originality. Before Chantry's time, sculpture refused to speak our language.

"The character of Canova's works appears to me neither very natural nor very original. Like our Flaxman, he is merely an imitator. He has chosen for his models Greek beauty and Greek nature. He sees beauty and nature only with the eyes of those who have preceded him. Yet he has but in a few instances successfully seized the severe and majestic character of the master pieces of antiquity; and it is only within these few years that he has excelled in the graceful and tender style, which is really his forte. His early

productions are all theatrical and affected. His female figures are like coquettes who have studied how to set forth their personal charms to the best advantage. Canova was spoiled by following the precepts of the French school. Your great naturalist Buffon says that *patience is genius.* Patience and diligence certainly constitute the genius of Canova. We, however, prefer inspiration. Canova lives too much among demi-gods, and not enough among men. It would appear that the ambition of the Pope's sculptor is to restore the lost statues of ancient Greece to their pedestals, instead of viewing nature and revealed religion with the eyes of Raphael."*

"But," said I to Sir William, "you have in England the statue of Bonaparte's mother, which is highly praised for dignity. You have also the colossal statue of the son ——— "

"The statue of Madame Mère," resumed Sir William, "may be regarded as an exception to the general style of Canova.† As to the statue

* I am certainly giving a proof of great impartiality in thus allowing the English to speak for themselves on such a subject. Just as I had revised this page for the press, I happened to see an article in the Morning Chronicle, which, agreeing with the criticisms of Blackwood's Magazine, speaks of the French school of painting and sculpture in a style of singular impertinence—the expression is really not too strong. This article is attributed to Mr. Hazlitt, whom I shall notice in a future letter. However, I must not omit mentioning that many Englishmen form a more favourable opinion of our artists.

† In any question relating to the genius of foreign nations, the English are exceedingly fond of using the term exception. Thus Corneille, Bossuet, Pascal, Buffon, Montesquieu, Rousseau, &c. are *exceptions*, who only prove the more incontestably the literary inferiority of the French.

of the god Mars, it is merely an athletic figure. You know Bonaparte himself said, when he saw it finished, 'Does Canova think I fight battles with my fists?' Exquisite grace is the distinguishing characteristic of Canova's sculpture. However, if you have seen his Hebe you must be convinced of the truth of the observation, that the pagan mythology, which is founded on the senses, is far remote from the chaste representations of Christian modesty, for which we are indebted to the pencil of Raphael. Canova's Hebe is light and airy as a sylph; but the expression of the countenance seems almost to denote that she has tasted the intoxicating nectar.—Chantry has not endeavoured to revive Greek sculpture. His art is a pure emanation of English genius. His style is perfectly original, and bears no more resemblance to that of the ancients than the romantic dramas of Shakspeare* are like the dramas of Euripides; or the chivalric heroes of Sir Walter Scott are like the heroes of paganism.

"In his representations of manly strength and feminine beauty, Chantry takes living nature for his model; and the powerful emotions which his works excite, are the most grateful tribute to his excellence. There is nothing constrained or theatrical in the attitudes of his statues, and the

* Having participated in a prospectus in which Shakspeare is placed side by side with Raphael,—a comparison which some have pronounced to be heresy, without waiting for explanation,—I think it necessary to mention that an Englishman is here speaking; and that right or wrong, the English regard Shakspeare as a dramatic Raphael. I shall take another opportunity of examining this question.

graceful simplicity of his draperies is always conspicuous. His busts of distinguished men are animated by the fire of genius and intelligence, and as it were encircled with the glory of immortality. Thorwaldsen, like Chantry, studies living nature; but he does not view it with a poet's eye. He possesses neither the power of invention nor the vigorous, dignified, and natural style which distinguish the English sculptor.

"Thorwaldsen ventured to place himself in competition with Canova, by the production of a groupe of the three Graces, which, however, served only to mark the distance that separates him from his rival. In his statue of the daughter of the Duke of Bedford, he also risked a comparison with Chantry, which proved by no means favourable to him. The statue of Lady Louisa Russell, another of the Duke's daughters, is one of the happiest productions of our English Phidias. The young lady is represented standing on tip-toe, and pressing a dove to her bosom. Nothing can exceed the graceful simplicity of this figure."

"I hope," said I to Sir William, "to have the pleasure of conducting you over our Paris museums. There, while viewing the works of our great French masters, I may perchance be inspired as you are by the talents of your countrymen; and perhaps I may be enabled to prove to you that the country which gave birth to a Coustou, a Puget, and a Bouchardon, may also produce a Chantry. Without adverting to our living artists, I may mention the name of Chaudet, who died

in 1813, and who, though he found the French school degenerated, soon freed himself from the trammels of the artificial style, and the insipid and affected ornaments for which you condemn us. I should like to shew you his statue of Belisarius."

Here we dropped our discussion, and went up stairs to take a view of the paintings.

LETTER XIII.

TO M. DE LAROCHE.

Before I offer any remarks on the annual exhibition of the works of the English artists, I will send you a brief account of Chantry, extracted from a notice of his works, to which Sir William directed my attention. I shall here only quote the praises of his countrymen, which are doubtless somewhat exaggerated; but I shall modify these commendations by the unprejudiced remarks which may be suggested to me whenever, in the course of my journey, I happen to fall in with any of Chantry's productions. It is interesting to trace the progress of original genius, from its first imperfect attempts, to the productions on which the stamp of powerful talent is impressed.

Francis Chantry was born at Norton, a little village in Derbyshire, on the 7th of April 1782.

His father, who was a farmer, died at an early age, and Chantry was brought up by his mother with all the tender solicitude of which an only son is generally the object. He received his first education at the village school of Norton; and until he attained his seventeenth year, his time was divided between his elementary studies and the labours of agriculture. But impelled by the vague restlessness of genius, as yet unconscious of its own existence, he felt an unconquerable dislike to the business of a farmer, for which he had been intended, and having expressed a wish to follow the legal profession, he was articled to a respectable attorney at Sheffield. However, a more distinguished destiny awaited him.

When residing at Norton with his mother, young Chantry used in his leisure hours to amuse himself by modelling various objects in clay, without suspecting that this was the latent instinct of his genius. The day fixed for entering upon his new profession, at length arrived, and with that eagerness for novelty which always actuates youth, he arrived at Sheffield long before the appointed hour. While he was walking through the town, his attention was arrested by some images in the window of a carver and gilder named Ramsay. He stopped to examine them, and his future calling was immediately revealed to him. From that moment he formed a determination to become an artist. All the remonstrances of his friends were unavailing, and he articled himself as an apprentice to Ramsay. But the labours in which his master

employed him soon ceased to gratify his passion for the fine arts, and he occupied all his spare time in drawing and modelling from nature. Ramsay was insensible to his enthusiasm, and it is said that he frequently destroyed what he termed Chantry's useless trash. But the young artist already felt a foreboding of his future success, and spent his evenings in his chamber modelling groupes and figures, which he sent to his mother, who still lives to enjoy her son's fame.

After three years labour thus clandestinely pursued, he fortunately fell in with friends who were capable of appreciating his talent, and among others with Raphael Smith, who was himself an artist of some ability. Smith assured Chantry, that he might confidently aspire to the attainment of perfection, and he consequently advised him to quit his master, and to proceed to London to acquire the mechanical knowledge of which he stood in need.

Sculpture is a more laborious profession than painting; and, like painting and poetry, to be pleasing it must rise above mediocrity. Chantry had to struggle with numerous difficulties. It appears that he even suspended his studies for a time to travel, not in the classic land of art, but in Scotland and Ireland. He was attacked by a dangerous fever in Dublin, whence he returned to fix his abode in London.

Being now wholly devoted to his profession he made rapid advancement. He had already formed in idea the principle on which he intended to exe-

cute his works, and he only wanted an opportunity of realizing it. One of his earliest works was the bust of his friend Raphael Smith, which was executed with singular felicity. He afterwards produced a bust of Horne Tooke, in which he pourtrayed all the shrewdness and sagacity which distinguished that celebrated man. The fame of Chantry was just beginning to spread, when he declared himself a competitor for the execution of the statue of George III., and a curious circumstance had well nigh occasioned the preference to be given to an inferior rival. Chantry like Canova has turned his attention to painting as well as to sculpture, but with greater success than the Italian artist, who has painted only bad pictures, which by a singular error of judgment, he is said to prefer to the master-pieces produced by his chisel. When Chantry presented his design for the late king's statue, it obtained general approbation; but, at a meeting of the common council, it was observed that the artist was a painter, and *consequently* incapable of executing the work of a sculptor. Sir William Curtis, addressing Chantry, said "you hear this, young man. What answer have you to make? Are you a painter or a sculptor?"—"I am a sculptor," replied the artist; and his statue proved the justice of this declaration. The affecting monument raised to the memory of the daughter of the English translator of Froissard, (Mr. Johnes of Hafod,) the statue of president Blair, that of the late Lord Melville, and the bust of professor Play-

fair, added to his reputation. In the monuments of Colonel Cadogan and Generals Bowes and Gillespie, he proved, that though simple nature may degenerate into vulgarity, when the chisel is guided by feeble hands, yet that the power of genius is capable of elevating it to genuine dignity and grace.

In 1814, Chantry visited Paris to admire the treasures of art which then adorned the Louvre. He made a second visit to the French capital, after the northern invaders had stripped our museums. He returned to England by the way of Normandy, where he made some valuable sketches of various monuments of gothic architecture. Nodier and Taylor had not yet executed their national work, which is embellished with designs of those noble ruins of the middle ages, so highly admired by the English.

On his return to England, Chantry executed his famous groupe for Lichfield Cathedral, his colossal figure of Satan; which is worthy of Milton, the statues of Lady St. Vincent and Lady Louisa Russell;* the remarkable head of John Rennie, and two busts of Sir J. Banks and Benjamin West. Of the two last mentioned busts, one is for the Antiquarian Society and the other for the Royal Academy, of which Chantry was admitted a member in 1818.

Some are of opinion that Chantry's master-piece is the statue of Dr. Anderson, a venerable old

* The statue of Lady Louisa Russell was executed for the Duke of Bedford, and is now at Woburn Abbey, with Canova's three Graces.

man; but others award the palm of superiority to the groupe of the sleeping sisters. I abstain from mentioning all his productions, as a cold enumeration must be destitute of interest.

After his visit to France, Chantry proceeded to Italy. You will perhaps like to know his opinion of Canova, with whom he contracted a friendship which reflects honour on both. The following extract from one of his letters, may serve to counterbalance the criticism of Sir William.

"Above all modern art in Rome, Canova's works are the chief attractions. His latter productions are of a far more natural and exalted character than his earlier works; and his fame is wronged by his masterly statues, which are now common in England. He is excelling in simplicity and grace every day. An Endymion for the Duke of Devonshire, a Magdalen for Lord Liverpool, and a Nymph, are his latest works and his best. There is also a noble equestrian statue of the King of Naples:—the revolution of its head have kept pace with those of the kingdom. A poet in Rome has published a book of sonnets on Canova's works; each production has its particular sonnet."

The wonderful productions of Michael-Angelo produced a profound impression on Chantry. He formed a just conception of the power of that extraordinary genius, whose defects he thought seemed to be an attempt to express too much, and a wish to attain impossible perfection.

During the last few years Chantry has produced works of extraordinary merit, among others the statue of James Watt, &c.

LETTER XIV.

TO MR. TAYLOR.

I MUST not omit mentioning to you the powerful impression produced on me by Flaxman's groupe of Michael subduing the rebellious archangel. Of all the English sculptors, Flaxman has best fulfilled the true vocation of the artist, by labouring for the glory of art, rather than for the celebrity of individuals. When very young he produced some excellent bas-reliefs in Italy, and he early distinguished himself for correctness of design, a point which had been much neglected by his predecessors.

Flaxman's figures possess more ideal beauty than those of Bacon, though the females of the latter are truly angelic. Bacon has acquired great reputation by his mausoleum of Sterne's Eliza and Whitbread's monument: the latter, however, is evidently copied from the monument of Richelieu, by Girardon. With regard to Bacon's works it may be observed, that there is in general a certain degree of confusion in his groupes, and obscurity in his allegories, and that some of his statues present an awkward imitation of modern costume. Flaxman has a more exquisite perception of the beautiful. His mausoleum of Collins, and his monuments of Lords Mansfield, Home and Abercrombie, bear evidence of pure and decided

talent. I have heard high praise bestowed on his statue of Washington; and it cannot be doubted that the English sculptor, who has formed the most correct conceptions of the antique, was well qualified to produce an accurate representation of the modern Epaminondas, who bears so many traits of resemblance to the great men whose exalted virtues and simple manners are described by Plutarch. His continual study and imitation of the monuments of antiquity, have procured for Flaxman the surname of the Racine of sculpture; a compliment which is probably greater than those by whom it has been conferred intend it to be. Nothing can be more false than parallels between such opposite kinds of talent and style.—The poet creates a whole drama; the sculptor, who is still more restricted than the painter, can at most represent only a single scene. However, Flaxman's profound knowledge of his art, his devoted admiration of the master-pieces of Greece, and his chaste, correct, and dignified style, prove that the complimentary comparison is in some measure just. Flaxman has published a series of drawings, which may be truly called studies of Homer and Æschylus.* He is, in short, a classic artist: must we therefore infer that he is deficient in imagination and originality? If so, he would present only one point of resemblance to Racine, who studied nature; while Flaxman has studied the ancients more than nature. The works of Racine present an exquisite grace, sensibility, and

* His drawings from Dante are no less excellent.

finish, which do not exist in an equal degree in Flaxman's sculpture. I readily admit that his statues and groupes are characterized by the taste of the author of Phædra, but the genius of Racine is wanting.

The important monuments of London seem to be chiefly consigned to Mr. Westmacott. This artist excels in grace and harmony of contour. He ought perhaps to devote himself wholly to the representation of nymphs. His Achilles, which has been erected as a monument to the Duke of Wellington, is merely a colossal Adonis. Westmacott would have succeeded better in representing the youthful hero grouped with the daughters of King Lycomedes. Who would believe that this gladiator Achilles could ever have deceived Dœdamia and her companions, under the disguise of a female?*

Perhaps Westmacott's master-piece is his monument of Fox expiring in the arms of Liberty.—The dying statesman is represented with upraised eyes, as if taking his last sad farewell of the goddess. At his feet is Peace lamenting the loss of him who so constantly pleaded her cause, and an African on his knees, expresses his gratitude to the independent minister, whose brief administration

* This colossal statue, which is erected in Hyde Park, as a monument to the Duke of Wellington, represents Achilles raising his shield. The illusion is somewhat forced. The ladies who subscribed for the monument, affirm that the artist did not consult them respecting this allegorical statue; and that it was completed before the subscription was set on foot. A great outcry has been raised against the undraped figure of Achilles.

was distinguished by the abolition of the slave trade. In the kneeling figure the artist has preserved the characteristics of the African form and features, while he has imparted to them an air of dignity and mildness, which powerfully illustrate the truth of Mr. Wilberforce's remark, that the negro, as well as the white man, was created after God's own image.

To close my observations on the English sculptors, I may repeat with my interlocutor Sir William, that Chantry is the only one among them who is distinguished for true originality; since, even in his most trivial productions, he so ably blends truth with poetry, adorning the figures of his children with the captivating graces of ingenuousness, delicacy, and innocence, and fixing on his busts the smile, the fleeting thought, the glance of enthusiasm, or the grave expression of meditation. Is it not to be regretted that a man of such exquisite talent should lose sight of his real destination, and content himself with being merely a sculptor of busts? Is it not also a subject of regret that England does not open her eyes to her own glory, and employ Chantry's immortal chisel on some great national subject? Instances of misapplied talent are, unfortunately, but too frequent: thus we find that Sir Thomas Lawrence, the president of the Royal Academy, confines his ambition to being a portrait painter. I may add, that of all the English sculptors, Chantry possesses the most matured powers of genius, while he is, at the same time, the youngest in reputation.

LETTER XV.

TO MR. TAYLOR.

More civil, though no less partial than the rest of his countrymen, the traveller Paul, who you know is no other than the *Great Unknown* himself, has applied certain contemptuous epithets to our national school of painting, while at the same time he admits that it has produced artists of the very first class. By a just retaliation it would be easy to prove to England that she has hitherto possessed neither a school of painting, nor first-rate artists. On examining the collections of some of the English nobility, which contain more master-pieces than the villas and galleries of Italy, and which would probably suffice to supply ten establishments such as our Louvre, one is almost tempted to believe that national pride has whispered to England the advice which the muse of Virgil addressed to the Romans:

Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra, &c.
Æneid VI.

The history of the early progress of English painting, up to the reign of Henry VIII., can only be interesting to the antiquary. Actuated by a kind of Egyptian vanity, Henry VII. secured the glory of his mausoleum by the encouragement

of architecture, while he neglected all the other arts. But Henry VIII., who was naturally munificent, sought to rival the splendour which was maintained at the court of Francis I., and vied with the French monarch in patronizing the great masters of Italy. Henry began to form a collection of pictures; but the principles of religious reform, which, during his reign, ceased to be an occult power, was more fatal to the arts than the ostentation and vanity of the king proved favourable to them. It must, however, be remembered that Holbein flourished under the auspices of Henry VIII. The minority of Edward, and the religious re-action in the reign of Mary, occasioned a chasm in the history of English painting; and when Elizabeth ascended the throne, vanity prompted her to claim to herself the exclusive worship of the fine arts. If she encouraged Zucchero, and a few Flemish painters, it was only for the sake of multiplying her own portraits. James, her successor, showed no inclination to patronize artists or pictures; and it has been observed, that it was fortunate he did not, since he would probably have communicated to painting the pedantic taste with which he infected literature. At length a propitious era arrived in the reign of Charles I., that generous protector and enlightened judge of art, whose sketches deserved the honour of being corrected by Rubens.—Charles, who in some measure naturalized Vandyke in England, augmented the collections of

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Henry VIII., and purchased the celebrated cartoons of Raphael.

The fine arts shared the proscription and exile of the Stuarts. The populace, blinded by hatred and caprice, hoped to efface the brilliant traces of tyranny, by destroying palaces and their decorations. Painting was idolatry in the eyes of the puritans, who persuaded themselves they were imitating the faithful Israelites of the reign of Jeroboam, in overthrowing altars raised to false gods. The restoration revived the fine arts; but no traces of French taste and elegance were observable, except in architecture. Not content with ridiculing the affected primness of the revolutionary party, the royalists introduced licentiousness into painting and literature, by way of re-action against puritanical austerity. The fashionable painter of the day was Sir Peter Lely, who perhaps possessed as much originality of talent as Vandyke, but who frequently destroyed the effect of his truly historical portraits by the introduction of fantastical accessories.—Vandyke was as faithful to the costume of his time as he was natural in his draperies. When viewing the brilliant circle of court beauties who have been immortalized by the pencil of Lely, and the memoirs of Hamilton, easy to understand the anathema pronounced by a Bridgenorth of the time upon bare necks and shoulders.

After the death of Charles II., the prelude of a new revolution boded ill for the fine arts. This

revolution was consummated to the advantage of a monarch who loved glory, but who paid but little attention to artists, by whom glory is immortalized.

Sir Godfrey Kneller was the only painter of eminence during the reigns of William and Anne, a period more fertile in wits and classic prose writers than in distinguished poets or artists. In the reign of George I., the arts were utterly neglected, and it required the friendship of Pope and other celebrated literary contemporaries, to transmit the name of Jarvis to posterity. After this interval of neglect, and consequent decline, painting again received encouragement from George I. or rather from Queen Caroline. This reign gave birth to the celebrated Hogarth, whose pictures, I confess, afford me more amusement than any others; but I must take my place among those to whom Hogarth himself appealed, when he acknowledged every body to be judges except connoisseurs. However, in spite of the enthusiasm of Walpole, I must remark that the highly dramatic and moral compositions of Hogarth are, for the most part, ill designed, and feebly coloured, and prove that he neglected the mechanism of his art.

Sir Joshua Reynolds may be said to have found the English ol of painting in its infancy, and he surprised his contemporaries, towards the close of the last century, by producing some children's heads, which will bear a comparison with those of Correggio. In landscape painting, Gains-

borough and Wilson were artists worthy of any school. But West was the only one who successfully adopted the real historical style. With a great deal of pretension, joined to sincere enthusiasm, Barry left behind him excellent lessons in painting, but inferior pictures. He mistook his blind ambition for a certain pledge of success. His genius fulfilled none of the promises it held out.

The above mentioned artists may be regarded as the founders of the English Royal Academy, though the idea of that institution belongs particularly to Sir Joshua Reynolds. If we consider the exhibition of the present year as a specimen of the progress of art in England, we may judge of the fruits produced by the lessons of the masters above alluded to, and the results of the institution. Hogarth alone opposed the establishment of an academy of painting, observing that one of the vices, common to all corporations in literature and the arts, is the vanity to which they give rise. The self-importance of the whole body is communicated to each particular member, and an academician is like a doctor, whom a diploma elevates to the rank of the faculty, however inferior his talent. These dignitaries, fancying they constitute the legislative assembly of taste, arbitrarily determine the standards of excellence, and are very likely to sanction any erroneous system which caprice or frivolous theory may introduce. In these assemblies the talent for discussion being more influential than any other, it becomes the

grand object of ambition, and to be a critic of art, rather than an artist, is accounted the surest mode of attaining distinction. Besides, the business of managing the institution diverts attention from its object; factions arise, and every academician whose professional talent happens to be neglected or despised, seeks to raise himself to importance by forming cabals.

Perhaps it will scarcely be credited that the English academy of the fine arts, conscious of its own mediocrity, secretly opposed the plan of establishing a museum, like the Louvre, consisting of a selection from the works of the most celebrated foreign painters. The academicians had for a considerable period dazzled the public by their annual exhibition of modern pictures, and they claimed to themselves the merit of having formed the taste of the present generation. They trembled at the idea of a gallery, by which the public would be taught to appreciate the merits of the Italian school of painting. They were aware that the simplicity, grandeur, energy, and truth of the works of the great masters, would expose the defects of the English school. It was declared that the projected establishment would tend to destroy the principles of art, to check national enthusiasm, to undermine well merited reputation, and to deprive English artists of the means of subsistence. In short, libels were even promulgated against Raphael and his competitors.

The British Gallery was, however, established in spite of opposition. The consequence has been that

national painters are not less esteemed and encouraged; while foreign artists are more admired, because the public taste is improved. This gallery, which, in point of size, is calculated to contain the collection of a private individual, rather than that of a great nation, is open twice every year; first for the exhibition of the productions of English artists, and next for the works of the old masters of the Italian and Flemish schools. The subscribers lend their pictures for a year only. I shall take another opportunity of noticing the exhibition of the works of modern artists at the British Gallery.

When I quitted Paris, every one was remarking with justice the inferiority of our last exhibition compared with preceding ones. But even last year, a few happy imitations served to remind us, that exile has not yet wholly deprived France of David, whose pencil has produced the dignified beauty of antique sculpture, and the calm and sublime nature of the Athenian school. We can still boast of the elegant and creative fancy of Gerard. Girodat has lost none of his bold and ardent imagination. Gros and Guérin still charm us,—the one by his vigorous style, and the other by the delicacy and softness of his outlines; while the fertile originality of Horace Vernet will, it is to be hoped, long continue to excite admiration.*

The present exhibition at Somerset House re-

* The above remarks were written upon the exhibition of 1822. Our exhibition of 1824 contained pictures worthy of the artists to whom I have here briefly alluded.

flects but little credit on the Royal Academy. The majority of the pictures consist of portraits, painted less for the interest and fame of the artists, than for the sake of flattering the vanity or caprice of the sitters, who love to exhibit themselves, in their elegant gilt frames, to the admiration of the ignorant and the idle. I must, however, render justice to the portraits of Sir Thomas Lawrence, the president of the academy, and to those of Jackson, Raeburn, Shee, and Phillips. "These," said Sir William, "are historical pictures, as a celebrated critic once said, on seeing the portrait of Pope Julius, by Titian. Indeed, the portraits of the Dukes of York and Wellington are not mere inanimate masks. They represent nature, character, and life; and deserve to be hung beside the true historical master-pieces of Vandyke."

I was also much pleased with some poetical subjects by Howard, whose elegant taste and imagination I had heard highly extolled by Sir William. But he unfortunately attempted to fix on the canvas the form of the delicate Ariel; this was certainly a failure, for the figure of his spirit was any thing but airy. His Caliban, too, was merely a grotesque representation. Howard also appears to have formed an erroneous conception of his powers, when he hoped to realize the beautiful apparition of the witch of the Alps. Lord Byron would never have recognized, in the mortal form which the artist placed beneath the sunbow, that emanation of the cataract, whose divine aspect diverted for a while the despair and remorse of

Manfred. Thomson has not been more successful in pourtraying a scene from the Tempest. The styles of Westall and Howard are pretty generally known in France, through the medium of engravings, and the elegant vignettes which embellish the works of Byron and Scott. Westall is what the English term an agreeable mannerist. His rural scenes have a kind of dramatic effect; and a pleasing tone of melancholy, in general, pervades his works. However, his picture in the present exhibition has more of pretension in it than any other in Somerset House: it is a mythological subject, representing Psyche, advancing with an air of curiosity and timidity, to surprise her mysterious lover. The drawing is very faulty. The figure of Cupid is pleasing, but that of Psyche is decidedly vulgar. The back ground and draperies of this picture, which reminds me of Gros' Saul, have a disagreeable glare. How different from the pure colouring, delicate touch, and natural effect which distinguish a groupe of three children in the same room by Phillips!

There is no historical picture of merit in this year's exhibition. I was, however, amused by a scene from the *Précieuses ridicules* by Chalon. Mascarille exclaims:--

Au voleur! au voleur! au voleur!
Votre œil en tapinois me dérobe mon cœur.

The mock heroic air of the pretended Marquess is tolerably well pourtrayed, as is also the admiration of the prude.

Oh! mon Dieu, voilá qui est dans le dernier galant!

It is gratifying to meet with Molière, after looking at the many gaudily coloured masks with which the exhibition rooms abound. "The recollection of him would almost induce me, in spite of myself, to ridicule the throng of originals by whom we are surrounded," said Sir William, who is rather of a satirical turn. "Just let me call your attention to some of the living caricatures of old England, who are moving about here. By the cut of his collar, his short coat, and above all, his conceited air, you may there recognise one of our dandies, to whom I hope you intend to devote a chapter of your tour. I just now observed him opening a passage for himself through the groupe collected before Chalon's picture, and having for a moment directed his eye-glass to Mascarille, he suddenly turned on his heel, and delivered his opinion of the picture by a single epithet. In this manner he will display his good taste and laconic impertinence before every picture in the exhibition. You will probably see this same coxcomb again at Vauxhall, in Bond-street, at the Opera, or perchance behind a haberdasher's counter. Observe that fantastic old maid, who has taken upon herself to act the part of *cicerone* before another picture of Chalon's, representing the fountain and market *des Innocens*. She is leading her auditors through the principal districts of Paris, and with regard to historical facts, she is confounding Saint Victor and Dulaure. What interesting digressions she is entering upon! She has lived in the gay circles of Paris, and has been

admired in her time. But alas! she is no longer young! She screws up her mouth and twists her form about with an air of affected grace. "But," added Sir William, eagerly, "pray do not regard her as an English woman.* She is merely a *blue stocking*, one of an anomalous class of the female sex, which unfortunately no Molière has yet expelled from England. See what a contrast she presents to the modest and unassuming air of the true daughters of John Bull! Neither must you confound with my fair countrywomen, that prude of a certain age, who affectedly casts down her eyes whenever she comes near a slightly draped figure. She reminds me of the story of three methodist ladies, who having inherited the effects of a deceased uncle, found themselves in possession of a valuable picture of Danae, by W..... The undraped figure so shocked the ladies, that they ordered the picture to be deposited in a garret. But even here the sight of it occasionally annoyed them, and they at length determined to engage a wretched dauber to paint a robe for Danae. W....., on his return from Italy, was made acquainted with the fate of his picture. The indignation of the artist may be better conceived than described."†

We withdrew to another room to take a view

* If a foreigner in Italy enquires, "What man is that?" alluding to a pensioner of the Papel Chapel, he receives for answer:—"*No e un uomo e un musico.*" Sir William excludes dandies and blue stockings from the English nation. They are, he says, neither men nor women.

† I have heard a similar anecdote related in Paris, respecting the destruction of a picture by one of our most distinguished masters.

of some of the productions of Constable, Calcott, Turner, Wilkie, Allan, &c.

In landscape and pictures of common life, the English preserve their superiority, and in these two departments of art their painters equal their descriptive poets. However, many of their landscapes are merely rapid sketches, very different from the dioramas created by the magic pencils of Girtin * or Turner.

The exhibition is not very splendid; but this must be attributed to the carelessness of the artists. Turner has sent but one picture. I am indebted to Mr. Hulmandell for my acquaintance with the greater part of this artist's astonishing water-colour drawings.

Turner has carried the principles of perspective to a greater length than any painter we know of. Claude himself has not more successfully represented the variations of the atmosphere at the different hours of the day, the accidents of light and shade in clear and cloudy weather, or the effects of storms and the differences of seasons. I send you the last number of the *Antiquities of Scotland*. The first engraving is from one of Turner's charming drawings. The wind not only agitates the foliage of the trees; but its powerful effects are admirably expressed on the dog and the poor woman, who is endeavouring to wrap herself up in her plaid, while her little boy goes to fetch her some water to refresh her fish. I should never

* An artist of extraordinary talent who died a few years ago.

tire of admiring the truth, the force, and striking effect of these pictures.

Constable, to whom C. Nodier last year awarded the palm, has not exerted himself this year. The few small landscapes he has sent are not sufficient to support his reputation. He is inferior to himself and to Calcott, whose *Smugglers surprised by a sudden change of weather*, is a fine production. With the exception of a man, who is looking up as if to utter a malediction on the heavens, there is nothing remarkable in the expression of the figures, and the groupes are by no means happy. It is in the representation of inanimate nature that Calcott charms us by the truth and freshness of his pencil. There is a surprising effect produced by the clearing off of the fog, and the gradual appearance of the rocks.

But Wilkie's master-piece is the work which most attracts attention in France. The graver has already made us acquainted with his *Blind Fiddler*, *Reading the Will*, *Blindman's Buff*, &c. all of them admirable for the composition of the groupes, and the variety of expression in the individual figures. This last picture represents Chelsea pensioners listening to the reading of the Gazette, which announces the battle of Waterloo. The choice of the subject has, no doubt, contributed to the extravagant eulogiums which the English lavish on this work; but it must be confessed that the artist has evinced great skill in his careful delineation of each figure in a pretty numerous groupe. All are animated and natural. The old man who is read-

ing the Gazette, a negro belonging to the military band, a soldier who is stretching his head out of a window, in fact every actor in this scene possesses originality of character. Allan, who is the rival of Wilkie, and is also a Scotchman, has been no less sparing of his productions; he has exhibited only one small picture, *The Broken Fiddle.* Allan's pictures are, like Wilkie's, conspicuous for exquisite tact in the conception of their subjects and the disposition of their parts. They exhibit the same happiness in the details, the same shrewdness of observation, the same talent for introducing characters, which, though totally distinct, are always expressed with originality. But if Wilkie may be accused of employing too pale a style of colouring, this complaint may be urged with still greater justice against Allan. The former artist too has left his rival far behind in invention, vivacity of expression, and correctness of drawing. I must not omit to add, that the graver has greatly contributed to maintain the popularity of Burnett, Wilkie, and Allan.

We must now bid adieu to the exhibition; but I shall devote a few letters to two or three painters, who exhibit their own works, and whose names are not always to be found in the catalogue of Somerset-house. It is a mistake to say that no picture is refused. A committee decides what works are worthy of admission, and no artist can send more than seven. No. 842 concludes the list of this year.

LETTER XVI.

TO M. DE LAROCHE.

I WILL now return to four painters, to whom I have merely casually alluded in a preceding letter; and I shall begin by asking a question, which is very much canvassed here, namely, whether the English really have a school of historic painting? I consent to answer in the affirmative, since they appeal to West and Fuseli, (the one an American, the other a Swiss, both naturalized in London) to Barry and to Haydon. But has this school produced any models? This question is not so easily answered. West found a munificent patron in George III. The royal galleries, which till then had received no large works, but those of foreign artists, and the churches, whose doors were before closed against paintings, now readily admitted the productions of West. National glory and religion furnished his subjects. During a life of eighty years, he had ample time to meditate on all the secrets of his art, and to perfect and retouch his compositions. West was, however, merely a painter of talent; if there is little to condemn in his pictures, there is at the same time nothing to excite that enthusiasm, or those strong emotions, which are the true end of painting. West possessed the science of the artist, but none of the genuine poetry of his art. The puritans re-

proached Raphael and Dominichino with seducing the people to popish superstition. West would have reconciled even the iconoclasts to church pictures. He satisfies the reason, like a cold narrator of historical events. One feels almost tempted to efface his colours, to decompose his groupes and figures, to study the frame-work of his pictures, and the geometrical lines which have guided the painter's hand; while, in a work of inspiration, on the contrary, we never think of analysing until we have been in some measure actors in the scene represented, and until we have shared the passions which animate each individual. There is notwithstanding a rich variety of expression and contrast in his great picture, in which Jesus confounds the wisdom of the Pharisees by his sublime parables, as well as by his miracles. The laws of unity, of action, and of interest have seldom been better observed. Every countenance presents an excellent study, from the expression of the priest, whose lips are quivering with the malediction which one almost seems to hear, to the mild and sweet ingenuousness which breathes through the features of the young girl, who is leaning on the Centurion's arm.

The appearance of the *Witch of Endor* is but a common-place phantasmagoria; West has succeeded better in his *Death on the Pale Horse*, in which he has embodied all the allegories contained in the imposing enumeration of the scourges in the sixth chapter of the Revelations. There is certainly something singularly horrible in this ideal repre-

sentation of triumphant death, but there is at the same time much vigour in the conception, and some of the details are admirably executed. West, however, possessed too judicious a taste to indulge often in subjects of this class. His picture of *St. Paul*, in the chapel at Greenwich, bears the genuine stamp of his talent.

Barry, the contemporary of West, with all his high pretension, was more remarkable for the singularity of his ideas, than for his talent as a painter. Measuring his own genius by the size of his pictures, his vanity led him to fancy himself the greatest artist in the world; and while he neglected proportions, and affected to despise colouring, he was particularly deficient in the delineation of nature and grace. His pictures, which decorate the Great Room of the Society of Arts, are filled with colossal figures. They are a succession of allegories, representing the progress of civilization. It is impossible to refrain from smiling when one's attention is directed to the faithful portraits of Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Captain Cooke, Dr. Burney, &c: all represented under the form of Tritons, surrounded by Nereides, in the *Triumph of the Thames.*

Fuseli, the professor of painting to the Royal Academy, seems to have mistaken the gigantic for the grand, caprice for originality, and exaggeration for boldness. In the professor's chair he inculcates other principles, he becomes enthusiastic, without being extravagant, and frequently evinces genuine taste in his remarks on the great masters

and the great epochs of art. But in his written lectures, his frequent hyperboles, forced metaphors, and metaphysical allusions, betray his Germanic origin, and the pedantic rather than enthusiastic school of Schlegel. How different from the chaste elegance of Reynolds! But it is chiefly in his pictures that Fuseli shows his contempt for the graces of the English Titian. He aspires to be the Michel-Angelo and the Dante of modern painting. Though sometimes grand and sublime, he is more frequently outrageously exaggerated, and transfers to his canvas the horrors of German extravagance. His forms, his colouring, his expression, embody ideal conceptions which belong to his own imagination alone, and are founded on nothing in nature. He is original, because he is like nobody else; and his favourite subjects, borrowed from the Scandinavian mythology, would be suitable decorations for the blood-stained palace of Odin.

The painter whom I have next to mention, is younger than any of the three I have already noticed, and has all of a sudden acquired, by two of his compositions, a greater share of praise than any of his predecessors or contemporaries. Mr. Haydon has obtained the reputation of the first historical painter in England, since the production of his *Christ entering Jerusalem*. *The Judgment of Solomon*, which preceded the latter picture, and which was also a remarkable composition, has since been looked upon only as a promise of future talent. *The Entry into Jerusalem*, which

was exhibited alternately in all the principal towns of Great Britain, met with some severe critics at Edinburgh, in the Aristarchi of the Edinburgh Review, who could see nothing in it beyond the sketch of a fine picture. However, it cannot be denied that at least one figure of this vast composition is really finished. There is considerable skill in the arrangement of the groupes, some of the contrasts are very effective, and the execution is often vigorous and bold. But the picture wants that beauty of colouring which gives life and sentiment to drawing. The figures seem to be waiting for the last touch of the pencil, which should animate them, as the breath of Jehovah animated the clay which his hands had moulded into forms. In his delineation of our Saviour's head, Haydon has ventured to depart from that species of consecrated tradition, to which all painters before him have conformed. We find in it none of that mingled gentleness and majesty, whose very mildness is characteristic. Mr. Haydon has aimed at personifying supreme intelligence, and infusing into the features of the Son of God and man, that divine radiance with which he is encircled in the pictures of the old masters.

Two of the groupes are particularly striking; one on the right, the other on the left of Jesus. The latter is composed of three portraits of celebrated writers. A sophist, with the features of Voltaire, sneers at Christ with a sardonic grin; a Christian philosopher, who is easily recognised for Sir Isaac Newton, is represented in the atti-

tude of respectful contemplation; and a religious poet prostrates himself in humble adoration. The last is Wordsworth, who has attempted to carry back poetry to its origin, the meditation of the great mysteries of nature and Providence. These portraits, however, by no means produce the same interest that is excited by the opposite groupe of the kneeling Centurion, and the repentant daughter led forward by her mother and sister. The artist has thrown an enchanting grace into the expression of this young girl.

Mr. Haydon has produced nothing since this picture, except some rich drawings from the Elgin Marbles, of which he is an enthusiastic admirer. It is true, I have not yet seen his *Resurrection of Lazarus*, and his *Macbeth*, which I heard very highly spoken of the other day.

One would wish to forget that Westall ever assumed a place among the historical painters at Somerset-house. In Mr. Cooke's exhibition in Soho-square, he is conspicuous for his elegant drawings of less ostentatious dimensions; but the works which reflect the greatest honour on his talents are his beautiful vignettes, in which the defects of drawing are redeemed by completeness of general effect. What a fund of poetry he can compress within the space of four square inches! How happily are the charms of innocence and beauty blended in his female figures! What poet, whose works have been illustrated by Westall, but must feel that those illustrations have embodied the ideality of his most pleasing dreams; for

sylphs and fairies, and not the forms of mortals, are the usual creations of his pencil!

Stothard, who has illustrated scenes of a more domestic character than Westall, comes next to him in merit. He is superior to Smirke, who, though sometimes original, is often merely burlesque. The *Canterbury Pilgrims*, from the poetry of Chaucer, is a fine composition by Stothard; but I have only seen the engraving.

LETTER XVII.

TO MR. TAYLOR.

The Exhibition is not the only place in which I have sought the works of the English painters. I have sometimes met with them in the different private collections in London. Sir John Leicester's Gallery presents the greatest number; it being reserved almost exclusively for the productions of the English school, the origin of which is prudently dated from the successful career of Sir Joshua Reynolds. In reviewing the successors of that artist, I cannot do better than begin with the individual, who not only officially presides over his colleagues of the Academy, but who seems to have followed the example of Sir Joshua in making his pencil immortalize the distinguished personages of the day. Had his genius taken another

direction, would Sir Thomas Lawrence have become a great historical painter? His friends assure us that he would. All that can be said is, that he is the richest artist in Europe, and the most original of all portrait painters. Sir J. Reynolds perhaps considered the historic style in a secondary point of view, as far as regarded himself, but he has left behind him some works of imagination which are still admired, and even more frequently cited than his portraits in the history of his talent. In his *Count Ugolino*, the son who is embracing the knees of his father, is certainly a very poetical invention; and who would fail to admire his *Holy Family?* Sir Thomas Lawrence has reserved all his imagination for his portraits. I should like to see some of them suddenly placed before a groupe of our artists. I am sure their astonishment would equal that of Count Manfred, in the Castle of Otranto, on seeing his grandfather's portrait walk out of the frame. But surprise would soon give way to criticism, in spite of the warm admiration excited by the first impression. Who, indeed, can help admiring the skill which Lawrence displays in creating a real atmosphere for his back-grounds, which are sometimes obscured in cloudy vapour, and sometimes, as it were, animated by a ray from the sun itself! Amidst this aërial space, living countenances, like the portraits of Titian and Vandyke, are smiling with animated gaiety, or wrapt in calm meditation. Lawrence is more happy in his attitudes than correct in his drawing, and so harmoniously do the

hue of his figures and texture of his draperies blend with the shades of his sky, verdure, or any other accessory object in the picture, that one would be almost tempted to suppose he had invented for his sitters a colouring adapted to his own particular style. It must be extremely difficult to combine so much poetry of feeling with such truth of expression. Yet, if I were an artist, I should certainly find something to object to in the tints of that very atmosphere in which Lawrence's portraits seem to move. I should condemn the vague, undecided execution, and the somewhat affected expression of his heads. Indeed I have not properly defined the nature of my admiration, if it seems any thing more than the surprise excited by a complete novelty of style. Yet I have seen some French and Italian artists led away, like me, by the first impulse of astonishment. Moreover, I even doubt whether Sir Thomas has not, like Reynolds, sacrificed too much to effect, and whether his fresh and brilliant colours will not fade as rapidly as those of his master. Among Sir Thomas's rivals, Jackson, Phillips, and Shee make brilliancy of colouring a much more principal object than he does; but, whether from neglecting the details, or from labouring them too minutely, those artists, as well as their pupils, seldom rise above mediocrity.—Next to Jackson, it is but just to mention Mr. Owen, who is an agreeable imitator of the manner of Sir Thomas.

Sir Thomas Lawrence, the president of the

Royal Academy, has, like Reynolds, obtained the honour of knighthood, and receives enormous prices for his portraits: it is so gratifying to survive one's self, and so glorious to occupy a place in a genealogical gallery! The favour of sitting to Sir Thomas becomes every year more and more expensive.

Sir Godfrey Kneller observed, that historical painters make the dead live, while they themselves never live till after their death. He added, that he painted the living because they enabled him to live.

Among those English painters who have obtained high reputation by adopting a style peculiar to themselves, I must not omit mentioning Martin, whose pictures produce a most impressive effect, by various modifications of light. Volcanic eruptions are, of course, calculated to furnish him with brilliant subjects. In representing the eruption of Vesuvius, he has been less desirous of giving a dramatic effect to his figures, by pourtraying the gestures and attitudes of terror, than of producing powerful contrasts by every reflection of light on the groupes and scenery. His great picture of *Belshazzar's Feast* is a most singular production. The colossal proportions of the palace of Babylon seem in some measure to overwhelm the ill-drawn pigmies, who are surprised by the miraculous glare of the threatening characters traced on the wall, and who express their terror by wild contortions. There is in this picture a certain trick of perspective, by means of

which the whole of the splendid palace, with its luxuriant decorations, are included within the limits of the frame. The fire of the mysterious characters, unequally distributed, produces accidents of light which have an exceedingly grand effect. But after all, does this phantasmagoria belong to the lawful resources of art? If criticism answer in the negative, then I must candidly say I prefer the still more surprising, but at the same time more natural, effects of a transparent picture.

I shall now take leave of Mr. Martin, to notice several artists, of whom England may unquestionably be proud. I allude to the painters of landscape and interiors.

I must beg leave to make a remark, which, fortunately, others have made before me, namely, that our dramatic poetry and our painting have in general corresponded but little with our history, the manners of our ancestors, or our own. It would not, therefore, be easy for us to grant so much importance as the English attach to a style of painting, which, in one sense, is entirely national—since it represents characters chosen from the mass of the people. The style which we term historical is indeed of all others least connected with our national history and character. By raising rural pictures to a higher degree of estimation, we should perhaps bring art to a closer resemblance to nature. This class of composition would enhance, instead of diminishing the merits

of the other, and if we should lose a canto of the Iliad, we should gain a novel of Sir Walter Scott.

In England, rural pictures are in general confined to domestic subjects. Among the painters who are most distinguished in this department, Allan alone has attempted history. Wilkie and Mulready confine themselves to subjects of common life. Wilkie's style must not be confounded with the imitation of the Flemish school in general, nor even with that of Teniers; though the title of the *Scotch Teniers* has occasionally been applied to Wilkie. He is not fond of exercising his pencil on the burlesque orgies of the tavern, the gross scenes of the guard-house, or the filthy and tattered garb of beggary. There is always a touch of caricature in the pictures of the Flemish masters. The heroes of the Dutch school produce a laugh, because they are buffoons; Wilkie's characters only excite a smile, because they are true to nature. Wilkie's domestic scenes deserve to be as popular as the history of the Vicar of Wakefield. His interiors compared with historical pictures are what Goldsmith's novel is to the pompous recitals of the epic muse. Teniers, who was endowed with great facility of talent, produced a vast number of works; but if Wilkie has produced less, it is because he is select in his choice, while Teniers never shrunk from any subject whatever. Wilkie's pictures are at once remarkable for simplicity and correct drawing; but perhaps, owing to this very correctness, we do not always find the freedom

of touch and freshness of colour which distinguish the pictures of Teniers. The latter frequently brings out only one striking trait of the countenance; but Wilkie expresses every little gesture of his figures. The works of the latter have been so multiplied by engravings, that it would be superfluous to describe here the moral and dramatic pictures of *The Reading of The Will*, *The Village Politicians*, *The Rent Day*, &c. It is difficult to say whether these highly original productions are most worthy of admiration for their general effect, or the exquisite finish of their details. Every time we look at one of Wilkie's pictures, we discover some object which we had not seen, or had not sufficiently observed before, but which is nevertheless perfectly in its place. Even when all his figures are animated by the same sentiment, what variety of expression does he display!—There are some sensations which Wilkie has succeeded in pourtraying, and which perhaps no other painter would so much as attempt; as, for example, sneezing, and the mingled feeling of pain and alarm, unaccompanied by grimace, which is evinced by the child in the *Cut Finger*. It is curious to visit Wilkie's painting room, when he is arranging his materials for a new picture. He procures a box of a size corresponding with that of the picture he is about to commence, and he places within it chairs, tables, and every minute article of furniture, according to the rank of the characters he intends introducing into his picture. He then arranges in this miniature apart-

ment a groupe of little manikins, and closes the door, having contrived an aperture through which his eye commands a full view of the interior.

Many eminent artists, I believe, copy from small manikins of this kind. Gainsborough used to groupe together fragments of stone and crystal, branches of trees, and other objects calculated to assist him in the delineation of landscape scenery.

LETTER XVIII.

TO M. AIMÉ BLAIN.

What words can describe to one who has lived all his life in cities, the solemn gloom of a forest, the solitary grandeur of a mountain, or the vast expanse of the ocean! It would be equally difficult to convey an idea of the magnificence of Turner's pictures to one who has never seen them. Turner has produced greater wonders than any English artist, and he may perhaps take the first rank among landscape painters. Yet he enjoys but little of the encouragement which is so liberally bestowed on the fine arts by persons of wealth in England; so true it is, that Sir Thomas Lawrence and his pupils have acquired a monopoly of patronage. Thus, when Sir Joshua Reynolds

imagined he had found a rival to his glory in Gainsborough, he was anxious to destroy the reputation which the latter enjoyed in portraiture, while he viewed his talents as a landscape painter with indifference. It is said the merits of Wilson were not, during his lifetime, appreciated as they deserved. Wilson and Gainsborough are great names in the history of art. The former was inspired by the climate and monuments of Italy; Gainsborough, while he imitated Ruysdael, Hobbima, and Watteau, painted only the pastoral scenery of England. Wilson, whose genius took a lofty epic flight, introduced into his pictures classic ruins and allegorical characters. Gainsborough, whose style was more simple if not more natural, loved to animate his landscapes by figures of shepherd lads and country girls, to which he gave an air of exquisite rustic grace. Wilson, in his admirable picture of *The Storm*, has mingled, with the conflict of the elements, Apollo pursuing the sons of Niobe. Gainsborough has painted a poor wood-cutter overtaken in a storm. Wilson's picture is so large, that the god and his victims, which, however, are merely intended for accessories, are lost in immensity of space. Gainsborough's wood-cutter excites a tender interest.

Woollet, the engraver, was the Balechou of Wilson's great landscapes.

Turner, like Wilson, has painted what may be styled historical landscapes. I wish I could employ language adequate to convey an idea of the sublime effects produced by his pictures. In-

pourtraying the scenery of nature he is as bold and grand as nature herself, and he combines ideal beauty with correctness of detail. While contemplating Turner's landscapes the heart bounds with joy, and is carried away by the enthusiasm which is felt when on the summit of a mountain. The eye wanders to the remote horizon. Turner paints all his landscapes on an extensive scale, and he seems, like a god, to rise above the world. The figures which he occasionally introduces are merely secondary objects, and are so diminutive in size, that they are like the men described by Shakspeare from the summit of Dover cliff. The insignificance of man when surrounded by the imposing masses of a mountain, or lost on the expanse of the ocean, is observable in Turner's works, even when his figures represent historical characters. In his picture of Hannibal crossing the Alps, the captain and his troops, who in history shook the colossal power of Rome at every step they advanced, are represented as mere pigmies, whom the genii of the mountains might annihilate by a few flakes of snow: yet the scene is as grand as though the artist had hurled the frightful avalanche upon the Carthaginians. One of our painters, in imitation of Poussin, has attempted to give an idea of the deluge, by the agony of a single family on the point of being swallowed up. Turner has represented the whole spectacle of the inundation of the earth. In Girodet's episode we tremble for a few solitary

victims; in Turner's picture we behold the danger of the whole human race.

If Turner represents the sun dispelling the vapours of the morning, and suspending his disk over the sea, instead of a single trembling ray, tracing a line of light over the surface of a few light waves, he unfolds, as it were, the boundless extent of the ocean, and the light of the orb of day blending with the water, forms a flood of sapphir and gold. In pictures of more limited dimensions, the same varied and beautiful effects are produced on the foliage of a tree, the smooth surface of a transparent lake, or on the undulations

> Du moindre zéphir dont l'haleine *
> Fait rider la face de l'eau.*

Turner is less successful in his views of cities. Even at Rome he seems to be confined, and does not breathe freely. He must have air and distant perspective. But whatever subject he represents, he always contrives an outlet, by which the imagination wanders beyond the confines of his canvas. I observed, at the commencement of my letter, that the effects of Turner's pictures cannot be described. Cook's engravings of the coasts of England, which are known in France, will afford a better idea of Turner's style than anything I can say.

I should be equally at a loss were I to attempt

* Lafontaine.

to explain the charm which pervades the works of Constable, Calcott, Ward, and Collins. Where is the secret of that humid freshness which one seems to feel on approaching their landscapes? With what artificial atmosphere do they envelope every object they delineate?

These painters seem to possess an art unknown even to Gainsborough, Ruysdael, and our landscape painters. Is it legitimate art, or is it the art of Sir Thomas Lawrence applied to landscape? I am not an artist, as I have before observed, and in the pictures of Constable and Calcott, I see only faithful representations of trees, water, and all the fugitive shades of the atmosphere. When animals are introduced into these rustic scenes, they are pourtrayed with admirable truth; it is in short the style of Cuyp carried to perfection. Cooper, Edwin Landseer, and Ward are the most distinguished animal painters in England.

I ought to add that the water-coloured paintings of Prout and Fielding may be viewed with admiration, even next to those of Girtin and Turner.

It is not certainly without a feeling of mortification, that I thus proclaim the superiority of the English landscape painters over ours. But I doubt not that our artists will sooner or later feel convinced of the necessity of copying nature rather than models. To produce powerful and varied effects of perspective, and light and shade, while at the same time due attention is paid to the

minutest details, appears to be the secret of the English landscape painters. The eye dwells for a moment on the foregrounds of their pictures, which are finished with clearness and delicacy, without being laboured; but the wonderful effects of their distances and skies rivet attention, and seem to realize the finest poetic descriptions.

LETTER XIX.

TO DR. BLACHERE.

I AM now almost reconciled to English Sundays. The first I spent in London was indeed far from agreeable. The gloom of a cloudy sky augmented the dullness which I naturally felt in a capital in which all the shops were shut up, as though the people were mourning for some great national calamity. Yesterday was a bright summer day. The sun shone from an early hour in the morning, and while its rays dispelled the misty exhalations of the Thames, they seemed to animate with a kind of involuntary gaiety, the countenances of this religious * people as they proceeded to church. The young girls were dressed out in their best; and the apprentice lads, with nosegays in their button-

* Instead of *religious* I ought perhaps to say *Sunday-dressing people.*

holes, would almost have led me to suppose that they intended to conclude the day by dancing in the neighbouring villages, like the young people of our fauxbourgs. Most of them were, however, prepared to set out on a country jaunt. The hurried and incessant driving of stages, the coachmen calling out to the foot passengers and enquiring whether they wished to go to Greenwich, Windsor, &c., the agility with which the people mounted on the roofs of the coaches, the numerous boats which were in motion on the Thames, all presented a picture of gaiety and animation. I could not help calling to mind the following lines of Lord Byron, who has so seldom described the domestic scenes of England.

"The seventh day this; the jubilee of man.
London! right well thou know'st the day of prayer:
Then thy spruce citizen, washed artizan,
And smug apprentice gulp their weekly air:
Thy coach of hackney, whiskey, one horse chair,
And humblest gig through sundry suburbs whirl,
To Hampstead, Brentford, Harrow, make repair;
Till the tired jade the wheel forgets to hurl,
Provoking envious gibe from each pedestrian churl.
Some o'er thy Thamis row the riboned fair,
Others along the safer turnpike fly;
Some Richmond-Hill ascend, some scud to Ware,
And many to the steep of Highgate hie.
Ask, ye Bœotian shades! the reason why?
'Tis to the worship of the solemn Horn,
Grasped in the holy hand of mystery,
In whose dread name both men and maids are sworn,
And consecrate the oath with draught and dance till morn."

The concluding lines of this latter stanza refer to a vulgar tradition respecting what is called

swearing at Highgate. People on their first visit to that village are said to go through the form of a burlesque oath at a tavern bearing the sign of the horns.

I am, &c.

LETTER XX.

TO MADAME DE BIEF.

PERMIT a traveller, who is your countryman, to give you an account of one of his excursions in the vicinity of London. Your graceful manners and charming conversation enable you to give and receive pleasure in the brilliant circles of fashionable society:—yet I know you do not despise the beauties of the country, and that you willingly forsake the splendid drawing-room for the tranquil enjoyment of green fields and shady groves. This encourages me to address to you my recollections of Richmond.

Having determined to pass my Sunday in viewing the picturesque scenery around Richmond Hill, I secured the last vacant place on the top of one of the stage coaches, which as I have before observed, are very different from the humble vehicles of Saint Germain and Saint Cloud. In an hour and a half after starting from town, we alighted at a village, where each of the passengers paid two shillings to the driver. I was obliged to guess

that we were at Richmond, for I had addressed several questions to the person who sat next me on the coach; but John Bull is often more taciturn on Sunday than during the rest of the week. Discouraged by my neighbour's monosyllabic answers, I abandoned all attempts at entering into conversation, and was compelled to content myself with being a silent observer of the surrounding scenery. Our road lay between fertile meadows, the trees on the either side occasionally forming arches of foliage above our heads; and we sometimes passed by rows of houses with flower-plots before them, and with their walls ornamented with festoons of verdure. At intervals we caught glimpses of the peaceful waves of the river, which is only half seen on account of its banks, and which here flows with grace rather than majesty. I repaired to the top of an ascending street, with as much eagerness and curiosity as though I had been on the point of discovering an unknown land. I would not turn my head, until I reached the highest point of the ascent, and at length I found unfolded around me the lovely scenes described by Thomson.

At the depth of three hundred feet beneath me, there extended an ocean of verdure, over which were here and there scattered, like islands, groupes of elm trees and gigantic oaks; the whole forming one vast forest, as elegant and ornamental as a grove. One is at a loss to guess what magic imparts so lovely and varied an effect to a picture whose plan is so simple, and whose chaste unifor-

mity is undisturbed by any remarkable object: it can only be the recollection of the poet's strains which carry the eye beyond the boundless landscape, to where "majestic Windsor lifts his princely brow," to "huge Aujusta," or to the enchanting retreat of the Muse, who interpreted the sorrows of Heloisa. Poor Jeannie Deans! I recollected what were your sensations on Richmond Hill! The characters of Sir W. Scott seem to belong to every scene in which the most trivial event of their history is described to have taken place.

I am not surprised that a traveller, who, however, is more frequently English than French, should have been smartly reprimanded in the Quarterly Review, for declaring that at Richmond the Thames is merely a little stream which might be easily drained. To drain the Thames! Was ever such an idea conceived? English pride would rather doom all the travellers in the world to perish in its waves! What would the critic have said, had he heard the anecdote of a coxcomb, who came all the way from Paris, for the express purpose of viewing the prospect from Richmond Hill, and after looking about him for a few moments, with an air of indifference, he turned on his heel, and said—"This is pretty enough to be sure; but take away the verdure and the water, and what is it!"

This enchanting spot awakened in the simple heart of Jeannie Deans, the recollections of her native country.

"This is a fine scene," said the Duke of Argyle to his companion, curious, perhaps, to draw out her sentiments; "we have nothing like it in Scotland."

"It's braw rich feeding for the cows, and they have a fine breed o'cattle here," replied Jeannie; "but I like just as weel to look at the craigs of Arthur's seat, and the sea coming in ayont them, as at a'thae muckle trees."

French travellers have frequently compared the view from Richmond Hill, with that of Saint Germain. The latter would doubtless have been more beautiful, but for the cutting down of those great trees, for the absence of which nothing can compensate. In France we seem too soon to have forgotten, that forests for a long time afforded refuge to our ancestors, the Gauls. Jeannie Deans, and her pious recollection of her poor country, carried back my thoughts to our native city; * which though more favoured by climate than the birth-place of Walter Scott's heroine, had, like Caledonia, its period of independence, its royal diadem, and, above all, its Wallaces and Bruces. But, alas! we cannot boast of our poets, and history has sometimes unjustly disputed our right to our almost forgotten honours of antiquity.

However, we still possess glorious ruins, which are the envy of foreigners, and with which privileged towns are proud to adorn their museums and their modern edifices. Like the ravaged soil of Greece, the kingdom of Bozon has been gradually stripped

* Arles.

of its marble gods, the fragments of its temples, and even its tombs!

Though we have perhaps been too indifferent to the loss of these treasures, let us at least cherish a due regard for those of which we cannot be deprived. You, Madam, I am sure, have often, in the course of your walks, stopped to examine those remnants of our ramparts which still retain the poetic name of Laura. Have you not contemplated with enthusiasm the sublime picture which suddenly breaks upon the eye? Almost beneath your feet arise the church of Grecian architecture, and the cypress, which calls to mind the palm-tree of the temple of Theseus. On the left the Durance glides smoothly over the picturesque arches of an aqueduct; on the right are the blooming gardens, tributary to its waves; in front a semi-circular verdant plain, shaded by a curtain of elegant poplars; and in the distance the humid girdle of the Rhone, with its islands of willows, and occasionally a flotilla with white spreading sails, coming from the colony of the Phocians. This prospect is indeed well worth that of Richmond Hill.

In Richmond Church I saw the tomb of Thomson, whose name is engraven on a bronze tablet, together with a quotation from his Winter. This quotation consists of an address to the Supreme Being. It is a pious and moral prayer. Yet I could not refrain from smiling as I read it, for I recollected that when at college, being at a loss for compliments on the New Year, I made a few alterations

in these very lines, and addressed them to our provisor, who was not a little surprised to find that I could write such good poetry in the language of Thomson. I must confess that these were the only English verses I ever composed in my life.

I also made a pilgrimage to Pope's residence. I reached Twickenham by an agreeable walk along the banks of the Thames, where at every step the eye is greeted by a succession of varied prospects and elegant structures. So many splendid buildings may perhaps be displeasing to the lovers of wild or purely rural scenery; but one is soon reminded that among these *villas* once arose the residence of Pope, the poet of civilization. There he modernized the sublime muse of Homer, for whose simple dignity he indeed occasionally substitutes the meretricious graces of a coquette. There, too, Pope applied the language of poetry to philosophy, and composed satires and epistles, such as Horace would have written, had he lived at the court of Queen Anne.

In 1807, Baroness Howe pulled down Pope's villa, and built in its stead a residence better suited to a lady of rank, and no doubt infinitely more *comfortable*. How many things do the English sacrifice for that favourite adjective! The famous grotto, which Pope himself adorned with shells and minerals, has been almost entirely stripped by the *pilgrims of his genius*. The weeping willow, which the poet planted with his own hands, is dead, and another bends its branches over the remains of the withered trunk. Further on,

in a more retired part of the grounds, is the obelisk which Pope erected to the memory of his mother. The best work he ever wrote could not have afforded me so much pleasure as the sight of this monument of filial affection. Happy the son who can deposit a wreath of laurel on the grave of the parent whom he has rendered proud and happy by his well earned fame!

Lord Byron observes that hypocrisy is the moral malady of England: moral, literary, and religious hypocrisy, &c. This is a subject upon which I shall enter more at length when I have seen more of London society. At present I may, in a few words, touch upon the literary and moral hypocrisy which prevails among the detractors of Pope. I shall not here advert to his poetic merit, a subject which it will be interesting to discuss when I come to consider the various phases of English literature. But the man and the author have been attacked with one voice. Cant is an absolute inquisition, and must have its victims:— Pope, who was a dutiful and affectionate son, a generous and disinterested friend, a man of susceptible feeling, it is true, but who was a stranger to envy, has been cited before the tribunal of scandal as an ungrateful, jealous, sordid, and licentious being. The Reverend Mr. Bowles has magnified his merest foibles into crimes: The unjust insinuations and criticisms of Pope's Editor are contrived with jesuitical art, by which means he obtains a reputation for candour, while he vents calumny on the name of the greatest lite-

rary genius of the reign of Queen Anne. Lord Byron is not the only one who has characterized by its real name the affected virtue of the Reverend critic; but it is evident that among the avengers of the sacred ashes of Pope, there are some who will not venture to make an open attack on an enemy who screens himself behind so specious a mask.

The anecdotes collected by Spence in the society of Pope, which have been recently published, have unfolded the private life of the author of the *Rape of the Lock*. They explain, in a way favourable to the poet, several facts, which have been perverted by Mr. Bowles. His resentment against Lady Mary Wortley Montague, were certainly in some measure justified by the disdain of that inconsistent woman, who departed from the proper sphere of her sex, to endeavour to play an important part in literature and politics.

Pope, who, as it has been observed, was not made for love, was weak enough to fancy that love might be made for him—an error, certainly, excusable in a poet. His passion for Lady Mary Montague embittered his youth, and the indifference of Martha Blount rendered him miserable in mature life. The soul of Rousseau is poured forth in his Julie. If Pope had never been in love, he would not have been so eloquent an interpreter of the complaints of Heloisa. Some effusions of his muse, which he suppressed after he recovered from the dream of his silly hopes, have been found. He presumed to speak to Lady

Mary Montague about the supposed sympathy of their souls, and he timidly asked her whether she could overlook a body which nature had used unkindly. At these words a loud burst of laughter betrayed the cruel disdain of the woman whose mind alone he had captivated.

Receive, Madame, &c.

LETTER XXI.

TO M. DUDRENEC.

When we read in the different critical works, and the inimitable letters of Horace Walpole, the description of the ancient manors which he visited; when we recal his admiration for the picturesque, and frequently sublime, effect of those towers, battlements, chapels, arches, &c. of which he composes pictures, alike remarkable for general grandeur and finished detail,—we naturally expect to find at Strawberry Hill a monument of the imposing architecture of the middle ages. But the castle, though a model of taste and elegance, may more properly be called a gothic building in miniature. It is the villa of a wealthy man of the world, rather than the manor of a feudal baron. Thus, too, in the Castle of Otranto, the style betrays the artifice of the pretended translator of

that imitation of the recitals of past time. I should prefer more simplicity and less correctness.

Strawberry Hill is situated on the banks of the Thames, at about a mile and a half from Twickenham. The apartments are fitted up and furnished in a style corresponding with the exterior of the building; the ceilings, niches, and all the details of the architecture are imitated from the picturesque decorations of cathedrals, abbeys, and other gothic edifices. Horace Walpole has been reproached for a certain degree of meanness towards artists; but the pictures and treasures of antiquity, which adorn Strawberry, would be worthy of a royal gallery. In his calculations there appears to have been less of absolute avarice than of that amateur mania, which by turns finds its gratification in paying at a dear and a cheap rate for objects of art or curiosity. I know a bibliomaniac baron who was as proud of having picked up, on one of the quays, a famous edition of a book with a remarkable fault, for the sum of ten sous, as for having purchased at a sale a bible of 1400, for fifty Louis.

Lord Byron, who, though a professed democrat, had occasionally his little aristocratic fits, has sought to avenge the memory of Horace Walpole, in the preface to the Doge of Venice, and he quotes him as a model of the true gentleman.—Under this title, the author of the Castle of Otranto appears decked out in foreign graces; and, certainly, the urbanity of the English aristocracy is still a mere imitation of Parisian grace. You will

perhaps say that Horace Walpole was, above all, a Frenchman in his excessive vanity. Vanity was, indeed, the disease of Walpole. It has often been observed, that vanity furnishes a fool with a shield invulnerable to ridicule, while it renders the man of understanding sensible to the slightest wound. The dread of ridicule was the torment of Walpole's life, and the cause of all his weaknesses. The necessity of defending himself against it, continually engrossed all the resources of his mind, and prevented him from rising to superiority in anything. In his intercourse with society, he could never venture to be unreservedly himself. Wherever he went he wore a mask, and his manners were always constrained or affected. It is only in the intimacy, or I may say, in the *negligence* of correspondence, that he is the rival of Voltaire. The inconsistencies in his character and social situation, are truly amusing. He was the son of a minister, a whig, an independent man, and a despiser of kings; and yet he was flattered by the smiles of power, and was proud of his distinguished birth. He seems to have written merely to prove what he was capable of doing, had he not despised the character of an author. He pretended to be indifferent about the success of his literary productions—he seemed to abandon them willingly to censure, and yet he was jealous of his own fame, and envious of that of others. He artfully invited praise, and anticipated objections. But for this dread of ridicule, which deprived Walpole of all openness of conduct, and boldness

of conception, he might have been original, and perhaps even great. He might have taken the lofty flight of genius, had he not been impeded by the puerile occupation of measuring all his steps, and listening to the gossip of opinion.—One can only address to him the very true compliment of Madame du Deffand, his poor blind friend, whom he often treated ungraciously: "You are possessed of discernment, delicate tact, and correct taste. You would have been the best companion in the world in past ages—you are so at the present time, and you will still be the same in ages to come." Though he has written no serious dissertation on science or the arts, politics or administration; though he exhibited none of those flights of genius which excite enthusiasm, yet Walpole never fails to interest. His letters, which are as amusing as those of Voltaire, are full of interesting anecdote, shrewd observation, ingenious satire, and pleasant philosophic remarks on persons and events. His historical memoirs sufficiently prove that this style of familiar history is not peculiar to France alone. It is true, I repeat, that Horace Walpole's manners were rather French than English. Who can ever forget his portraits of Lord Balmerino, George Selwyn, and the Duke of Newcastle—his admirable comic scene of the funeral of George II., and his anecdote of the marriage of Tracy?

Everything was calculated to intoxicate this English Vathek in his elegant palace. Strawberry was visited by celebrated artists, who looked upon

its owner as their Mecænas; by titled courtiers, who came to learn from him the tone of good company; and by the brilliant beauties of the day, who were happy to pay with a smile for the honour of figuring in Walpole's amusing chronicles.

But amidst Walpole's running fire of wit and raillery, which was the expression of derisive superiority; amidst that indifference and *nil admirari*, which has been styled philosophic happiness; in spite of the enjoyments of the wealthy egotist, and the luxury of the elegant nobleman,—what melancholy reflexions on human nature are excited by the confession of the courtier Democritus, when, stretched on his sick bed, he looked forward to the infirmities and miseries of old age and solitude! How differently did Evelyn contemplate the approaching close of existence!

I must here say a few words on a subject which I touched upon, when alluding to Say's Court and Wotton. Pope and Horace Walpole may, I think, be regarded as the authors of that revolution in taste, which substituted for the designs of Le Notre, and his imitators, the picturesque style of gardening; I must not call it the Anglo-chinese style, for the English claim all the originality of the invention. Addison, in the Spectator, threw out some hints on landscape architecture; and Pope, in a number of the Guardian, which is as amusing as a scene of Molière, disenchanted yew trees, metamorphosed into giants, dragons, or other monsters of vegetable sculpture. His humourous catalogue of trees ready cut for sale, contributed

in some measure to restore the mutilated branches of oaks and elms; and in his epistle to Lord Burlington, the poet traces out the rules of the new style of landscape gardening. Bridgeman pulled down park walls, and substituted ditches in their stead, by which means the eye was refreshed by distant prospects and perspective effects. Kent evinced true genius in the art of landscape gardening, preferring the irregularity of the imagination to the regularity of the compass. He was skilful in producing contrasts, and deceiving the eye by continual illusions. He contrived to impart beauty even to barren and unpicturesque sites; and he realized the most magical effects of painting. Kent displayed admirable ingenuity in his manner of introducing water into landscape gardening. Walpole, while he bestowes high praise on his originality of invention, attributes to Pope the merit of having helped to form his taste.

Brown continued several of Kent's plans, and tastefully modified his ideas in the laying out of certain villas. But he was somewhat of a mannerist. He carried even further than Kent his dislike of strait lines, and perhaps multiplied zigzags and labyrinths to too great an extent. The theory of English gardening has been ably explained by Mr. Repton. He observes that many new landed proprietors have neither the taste nor the wish to improve their estates, being more anxious to extend than to enjoy them. Before a man can feel a pride in embellishing his estate, he must be attached to it by sentiment; he must re-

spect and love it as the birth-place and home of his ancestors. The majority of new landed proprietors are mere speculators, who endeavour to double the produce of their estates, for the sake of embarking their capital in other ways. There are among them many individuals who have grown rich in mercantile pursuits, and who are not very eager to make improvements merely for the sake of pleasure.

I have just learned that Newstead Abbey is condemned as an old ruin, and is on the eve of being pulled down to make room for the erection of an elegant modern villa. Horace Walpole thus describes this venerable pile, which he visited during one of his tours:

"On my return I saw Newstead. The great east window of the church remains, and connects with the house; the hall entire, the refectory entire, the cloister untouched, with the ancient cistern of the convent, and their arms on it; a private chapel quite perfect. The park, which is still charming, has not been so much unprofaned; the present Lord has lost large sums, and paid part in old oaks, five thousand pounds of which have been cut near the house. In recompense he has built two baby forts, to pay his country in castles for the damage done to the navy, and planted a handful of Scotch firs, that look like plough-boys dressed in old family liveries for a public day. In the hall is a very good collection of pictures, all animals; the refectory, now the great drawing-room, is full of Byrons," &c.

The sale of Newstead was a cruel sacrifice to Lord Byron; it might even be regarded as a crime, but that a nobleman ought to pay his debts at any price. It is to be hoped that the new owner will respect the abbey, were it only for the sake of the beautiful farewell which the author of Childe Harold addressed to it at parting.

I remain, &c.

LETTER XXII.

TO M. ADOLPHE DE CHEVRY.

I HAVE paid a second visit to Richmond, which has afforded me no less pleasure than the first. The prospect should be seen on a sun-shiny day. A cloudy sky, by confounding the various tints of the verdure, produces a sameness of effect, and deprives the picture of all animation. The Thames itself seems to forget to flow, when the sun beams do not play upon its surface.

I have also been to Windsor, which may be called the Versailles of the kings of England. But it is a gothic Versailles, and that epithet renders it impossible to draw any comparison between the palace of the most magnificent of sovereigns and the castle of one of his feudal lords. * At the

* The English will perhaps say this is gasconading. But they must recollect the absurd title of king of France which their monarchs assumed for ages. Even Charles II. scrupled not to take this title, though he was in the pay of Louis XIV.

distance of three miles, Windsor Castle is discernible, with its terraces, towers, and waving banners, and the Thames flowing at its feet. This royal residence, which was built by William the Conqueror, enlarged by Edward III., embellished by Charles II., and finally repaired by the late king, consists of several buildings, whose irregularity adds to the effect of the whole. The castle, which is situated on the declivity of a hill, is terminated by a terrace 1870 feet long. On reaching this terrace, after passing through the gloomy court-yards, whose mournful solitude resembles that of a prison, a feeling of enthusiasm is excited at the aspect of the surrounding scene, which comprises a view of twelve different counties. The venerable walls of the castle have a certain air of royalty, and the ivy crowned towers are the more interesting when imagination associates them with the lovely English landscape which extends on every side.

In the first court, on an artificial eminence, covered with grass, stands the Round Tower.—This building contains the apartments of the governor, and is celebrated for having been the prison of James I. of Scotland, who was perfidiously seized in spite of the faith of treaties. In this very place, too, there was once confined a king of France, who sacrificed his freedom for his honour. His pretended coat of mail is shewn as a monument: it would have been better to have engraved on the walls his own noble words, which

might have served as a lesson to his conquerors.* Here also languished the gallant Surrey, who was condemned to death by the jealousy of Henry VIII. In the second court is the chapel, or collegiate church, of Windsor, the largest of the three royal chapels of England, and that which is most remarkable for chaste and elegant architecture. The interior is of an elliptical form. The choir, in which the knights of the garter are installed, is furnished with thirty stalls, surmounted by the banners and arms of each member of the order. The sight of these emblazoned escutcheons, the altar adorned with the arms of Edward, and the brilliant paintings on the gothic windows, transport one to the ages of chivalry. A religious sentiment completes this poetic illusion, when the solemn peal of the organ, harmonizing with the voices of the choristers, raises a pious emotion in the heart, and excites that vague kind of reverie which is so favourable to the worship of the past.

The royal apartments, which were furnished by Charles II. revive recollections of a different kind. There is nothing remarkable in the rooms themselves, except, indeed, that called St. George's, which the cicerone declares to be one of the finest in Europe. The queen's chamber contains a state bed, which is said to have cost thirteen thousand guineas.

There are some of Guido's pictures in Windsor

* Our King John said, "If good faith were banished from the rest of the world, it ought still to exist in the hearts of kings."

castle, which I did not very much admire. The richness of their colouring did not make amends for their want of expression. Venus and the Graces are deficient in beauty; the deliverance of Andromeda should have been more tragical, and Judith gazes at the head of Holofernes with an air of timidity, which calls to mind Racine's epigram:

"Je pleure, helas! sur ce pauvre Holoferne,
Si méchamment mis à mort par Judith."

There is a charming St. Catharine by Corregio; and the two Misers, by Quintin Matsys, is a striking original picture. The late king employed West to paint some pictures for the audience chamber. These productions, however, possess no extraordinary merit. The picture in the chapel, by the same artist, is better.

I made only a short excursion into Windsor forest; but I visited Eton college, to which I shall take another opportunity of alluding.

The late king, who resided chiefly at Windsor, lies buried in the chapel, with his royal consort, his beloved daughter Amelia, and his grand-daughter Princess Charlotte. The name of George III. will remain attached to perhaps the most extraordinary reign of the English monarchy; though during his latter years, that sovereign was doomed to be merely a crowned phantom. The modern Lear, deprived of sight and reason, and obliged to obey the commands of his own servants, enjoyed only occasional lucid intervals, as if to be made sensible of the unhappy discord which prevailed in

his family. The dignity which a long reign confers, even on the most insignificant monarch, did not protect George III. from the severe censure of the opposition party. Even history will perhaps grant him only negative virtues, and will accuse him of having, by his obstinacy and vindictive spirit, prolonged the useless conflict between England and America. However, the words which he addressed to the ambassador of the United States, certainly display greatness of mind. He told Mr. Adams, on his first audience, that though he had been the last man in England to acknowledge the independence of America, yet that, since the act was ratified, he should be the last to violate it. But George III. (who, in this sense, was a truly constitutional king) reigned almost continually under the controul of a dictatorial minister, to whom all the merit or blame of his actions must be attributed. He was the first prince of his dynasty who was truly an Englishman, and his influence extended only over the manners and opinions of his court. Our Henry IV. was the first gentleman in his dominions, and in an unchivalric age, George III. was the first farmer in his.

The simplicity of his manners, and the authority of his example and principles, had a salutary effect in England after the corrupt administration of Sir Robert Walpole. The memoirs of individuals, and the satire of the romance of Chrysal, bear evidence of the complete demoralization which existed in

England previously to the reign of George III. The English reproach us for the manners which prevailed during our regency; but certainly those of the court of George II. were no better.

LETTER XXIII.

TO M. AUG. D'HANTERIVE.

WINSDOR Castle, that proud monument of the ages of chivalry, awakens recollections of the poetic period, at which we must begin to study the institutions and national literature of England. We even find the cradle of Scottish poetry in the prison of James I. Here that amiable and gallant prince sought consolation in philosophy. Love soon came to divert the melancholy of the royal captive, and the beautiful Lady Jane Beaufort made him a poet. The American Addison has embellished with the graces of his elegant style the romantic history of that prince, who was worthy of a better fate, and who, when seated on his throne, did not forget the lady he had loved in adversity. The crown of Scotland adorned the brow of the fair Lady Jane; and when the poignards of regicides were directed against her lord, she threw herself as a protecting shield upon his bosom, and received the blows which were

intended for him; but received them, alas, in vain!

James acknowledged as his masters, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, with whom he was almost contemporary. From Chaucer to Lord Surrey, the succession of English poets was suspended for nearly two centuries. Thus Warton compares the appearance of Chaucer, in the national literature, to the sun-shine of a premature English spring, after which the chill of winter returns and destroys the ephemeral bloom of the buds and flowers. Five reigns, whose annals deserve to be traced with the hand of the executioner, to use an energetic expression of Voltaire, could scarcely be favourable to the progress of poetry. The rivalry of the Italian republics produced at once great writers and captains. But the civil dissensions of England agitated the whole mass of the nation. The public mind was inured to carnage; nothing was thought of but war and proscription. When Henry VI. ascended the throne, one half of the nobility and commoners had perished on the field of battle or the scaffold. Poetic genius did not shine in full glory until the reign of Elizabeth; for its light merely dawned in the time of Henry VIII.

If Chaucer was the father of English poetry, Surrey may be called its first born son. The history of that minstrel knight, whose lute resounded in the tower of Windsor, is connected with some of the most important events of the reign of the eighth Henry. The fabulous anecdotes of his wandering life would furnish materials for the

novelist, who may be inclined to paint the manners of the age after the style of Sir Walter Scott. Dr. Nott, who has written a life of the Earl of Surrey, has apparently exaggerated the influence of his genius, for Warton, who is less enthusiastic, has been refuted by Campbell; but in reading the biography of a poet, one is naturally inclined to give credit to the writer who affords the most poetic account of him.

Boccacio produced Chaucer, and Petrarch was the model of Surrey. The courts of France and England began to be distinguished for elegance. Francis I. produced a revolution in the style of our literature, by mingling gallantry with learning. The ladies, who, together with ecclesiastics, were invited to his carousals and festivals, gradually contributed to polish the pedantry which characterized the taste of the age. Henry VIII., who could not endure a rival, even in his amusements, displayed equal magnificence, and, like the conqueror of Marignan, made beauty preside over the warlike pomp of his tournaments. Henry was affable to the fair sex, and he did not evince harshness towards his wives, until after he had rendered them the objects of splendid homage. Poetry was naturally called into requisition at the festivals of the English court; for Henry loved the art, and was himself a writer of verse. Petrarch, the prince of amatory poets, was of course a favourite at such a court. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, became the Petrarch of England, and another Laura inspired his lay. He was

the son of Thomas, third Duke of Norfolk, was born in 1516, and was educated at Windsor, with Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, the natural son of the king, with whom he contracted an intimate friendship. The two young noblemen completed their academic and chivalric education at sixteen. The youths of the present day are reproached, and no doubt justly, for assuming the manners of mature life at eighteen; but in former times boys were early instructed in foreign languages, as well as in managing the war horse and combating at tournaments, and they were men at sixteen. At that age Richmond and Surrey quitted college * to be married, Richmond to the sister of his friend, and Surrey to Lady Frances, eldest daughter of Lord Oxford. The chroniclers, however, assert, that they were merely betrothed, and that Richmond, who died a year after, was never actually married. Surrey long lamented the premature death of the amiable companion of his sports and studies, as is evident from several of his sonnets, in which he combines the name of Richmond with that of the fair Geraldine.

It must be presumed, for the honour of the conjugal tie, that Surrey's love for the daughter of Lord Gerald Fitzgerald, was purely platonic, like that of Petrarch for Laura. At fifteen Geraldine became the wife of Sir Anthony Wood, who was

* Warton says they were educated at Oxford, but, according to Dr. Nott, they studied at Cambridge, of which University Surrey was ultimately appointed High Steward.

then in his sixtieth year. But two virtuous knights of that age openly cherished an attachment for two married ladies, whose reputation remained spotless, in spite of the tears they shed whenever their lovers were separated from them.

After the death of his friend, Surrey commenced his romantic travels. He made the tour of Europe, like another Amadis, proclaiming the peerless charms of his mistress, and declaring his readiness to defend the cause of her beauty by force of arms. He proceeded first to Florence, the capital of Tuscany, of which Geraldine's ancestors were originally natives. On his way, he stopped for a few days at the court of the Emperor, where he made acquaintance with Cornelius Agrippa, a celebrated alchymist of that time. The Scottish minstrel, in one of his poetic ballads, relates how the necromancer exhibited to Surrey, in an enchanted mirror, the image of Geraldine, languishing on her couch, and reading with tender emotion the verses of her faithful knight. Inspired by new enthusiasm, Surrey had no sooner arrived at Florence, than he publicly challenged any Christian, Jewish, Turkish, or Moorish lover, who should declare his mistress superior to Geraldine. The Grand Duke of Tuscany permitted combatants of all nations to enter his states, and Surrey was victorious in every conflict.

These tilts and tournaments did not prevent Surrey from paying his court to the Italian muses, and in his verses Geraldine is immortalized.

But notwithstanding the ardent and faithful attachment which the chivalrous Surrey entertained for her, Lady Geraldine, after the death of her first husband, became the wife of another. Platonic love did not always suffice for the beauties of the olden time; and Surrey, on his return to London, found his mistress Countess of Lincoln. In some of his poems, he expresses his regret for this event; and it would appear that he had recourse to the powerful stimulus of war and ambition, to divert away his grief. Warton and Walpole are mistaken in supposing he was present at the battle of Flodden Field; but it is certain that he commenced his career of arms in Scotland, and that, as the reward of his valour, he was invested with the order of the garter, a distinction which was then much more honourable than it now is. In consequence of a quarrel in which he became engaged about this period, he was sent a prisoner to Windsor, and soon after his liberation he was confined again for having incurred the displeasure of the king and the church, by eating flesh in Lent. Another offence, which was whimsical enough on the part of a hero and a man of letters, procured him an additional imprisonment of several months. He was accused of parading the streets of London by night, and breaking windows with a cross-bow. His justification is exceedingly curious, and will surprise those who may be tempted to regard this misdemeanour merely as a piece of idle folly.

"My motive," said he to his judges, "was a

religious one, though I confess that it lies open to misconstruction. It grieved me, my lords, to see the licentious manners of the citizens of London. They resembled the manners of Papal Rome, in her corruptest state, and not those of a Christian communion. Was I to suffer these unhappy men to perish without warning? That common charity forbade. The remonstrances of their spiritual pastors had been urged, I know, in vain. I therefore went at midnight through the streets, and shot from my cross-bow at their windows, that the stones passing noiseless through the air, and breaking in suddenly upon their guilty secrecy, might remind them of the suddenness of that punishment which the scriptures tell us divine justice will inflict on impenitent sinners, and so lead them to a reformation of manners."

The privy council was probably not very willing to credit that the young knight had sincerely become the Don Quixotte of reform. Dr. Nott, however, believes such to have been really the fact.

The war with France afforded noble occupation for the restless activity of Surrey. He held the rank of field-marshal in the English army during the expedition to Boulogne. That city fell into his power, and other feats of arms gained him a brilliant reputation for courage and military talent. French valour, however, triumphed in this campaign, and it was a skilful retreat which conferred the highest degree of honour on the Earl of Surrey. The poetic muse was not banished from

his tent, and one of his best sonnets was composed during that war.

But, in proportion as Surrey's popularity encreased, he lost credit with the monarch, whose jealous and cruel disposition was aggravated by age and infirmity. Surrey was beloved by the people and the army, and he could not but be hated by the tyrant. His love of glory was declared to be dangerous ambition. He was superseded in his command by his personal enemy, the Earl of Hertford, the leader of the Seymour faction. Surrey imprudently spoke of his enemy in angry terms, and perhaps expressed the hope of being avenged under another reign. The king manifested his aversion for him; this was inviting the attacks of calumny, and he was once more sent a prisoner to Windsor. His liberty was, for a brief interval, restored, in order that new plots might be hatched against him, and he was accused of high treason. It was declared that he entertained the intention of re-establishing popery, and marrying the Princess Mary. The proofs on which this charge was founded were, the protection he afforded to the Italians, and the escutcheon of Edward the Confessor being added to his arms. His eloquent defence was addressed to judges who had sold his life. He was condemned, and forfeited his head on the scaffold.

Thus perished the Earl of Surrey, in the flower of his age and genius, alike distinguished as a valiant knight and an accomplished troubadour.

The Italians, whom he was condemned for associating with, were artists who were supported by his liberality. The castle which he built at Norwich was the first model of Greek architecture in England. As a poet, Surrey evinces more correct taste and more natural feeling than might be expected in a reign in which every thing was sacrificed to religious controversy, and the subtleties of treacherous policy. He was not so learned as Petrarch, and consequently did not so frequently resort to pedantic allusions. Though not exempt from *concetti* and sentimental exaggeration, yet he preferred imitating his model in the simple graces of pure inspiration.

In Surrey's most brilliant sonnets, there are always some traces of that pensive melancholy which characterizes ill-fated love. Like all men of precocious talent and ardent feeling, he was early disenchanted from his heart's fondest illusion. He fell into the abstractions of Platonism which were in fashion, and which afforded him a refuge against the cruel realities of the tyrannical court to which his rank attached him. But his poetry is not merely expressive of the vague regrets of disappointed love. With exquisite sensibility he combined a singular talent for description. The following sonnet has all the freshness of the season which it paints. We must not forget, that the author wrote in an age in which poetic language was disfigured by pedantry, and that ideas which were then new have become common-place,

by having been expressed in a thousand different ways, for the space of three centuries.

"The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.
The nightingale, with feathers new, she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs.
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she flings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn, that was the flowers' bale.
And thus I see, among these pleasant things,
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs!"

An elegy by Surrey, on the miseries of absence, is written in a style so pure, that it would not disgrace the classic muse of Pope or Campbell. But as I have been describing Windsor, I will quote the lines which he wrote during his captivity in the round tower.

"So, cruel prison, how could betide, alas!
As proud Windsor? where I, in lust and joy,
With a king's son, my childish years did pass,
In greater feast than Priam's sons of Troy."
* * * *

In the situation of the poet, as Warton observes, nothing can be more natural than the reflection with which he commences his complaint. The superb palace in which he had passed his happiest days with the son of a king, was converted into a solitary prison. This unexpected

reverse of fortune naturally awakened a crowd of interesting ideas. The comparison of the present with the past reminded him of the pleasures of his boyish years, which he regretted the more deeply since Richmond had ceased to live. The loss of his friend occasioned an irreparable void in his affections, and drew from him the following beautiful apostrophe.

> "O, place of bliss! renewer of my woes!
> Give me account, where is my noble fere?
> Whom in thy walls thou did'st each night enclose;
> To other lief; but unto me most dear."

These elegiac stanzas close with a touching sentiment, quite in the taste of Petrarch.

> "Echo, alas! that doth my sorrow rue,
> Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint.
> Thus I alone, where all my freedom grew,
> In prison pine, with bondage and restraint:
> And with remembrance of the greater grief,
> To banish the less, I find my chief relief."

LETTER XXIV.

TO M. B——.

It must always be recollected, that the inhabitants of the different districts of London are no more to be confounded one with another, than

our good citizen of the Marais and the tradesman of the Rue St. Denis are to be ranked with the elegant inhabitants of the Chaussée-d'Antin. London, as I have already observed,* is divided into two distinct towns; the first, called the city, or east end, is the seat of English trade, while the west end is occupied by the court and fashionable world. The English merchants, who are the richest in the world, have not adopted the plan of our bankers, in building a *Chaussée d'Antin;* but those among them who have amassed sufficient wealth, desert the neighbourhood of the Exchange, and remove to the west end of the town, to rival the magnificence of the nobility. The greater part repair in the morning to their counting-houses, in the dark and narrow lanes in which the foundation of their fortunes was laid, and return in the evening to their elegant mansions, to join the circles which the luxuries of their table collect around them. In London, as in Paris, the Amphitryon, who gives good dinners, is never at a loss for agreeable company, whether he be a nobleman or a banker.

But there are many wealthy families who are content to reside in the city, and among them we must look for specimens of the true English character. The bustle which prevails in the city exceeds description. The foot pavements, which

* See Letter VI. I consider Westminster as a third town by itself. It contains the two houses of parliament and the principal courts of law.

are narrower here than at the west end of the town, are insufficient to accommodate the crowd of passengers who are continually moving to and fro. One is often compelled to abandon the foot pavement for a moment and walk in the horse road, a thing which never happens, the English politely say, but to dogs and Frenchmen. Cheapside and Fleet-street are described by Sir W. Scott, in his novel of the "Fortunes of Nigel;" but the citizens of the time of good King James would be mightily astonished at the present splendor and magnificence of the shops in those streets. Cheapside and Fleet-street are like our Rue St. Denis and Rue Vivienne combined.

We shall find still handsomer streets in the west end of the town; but before we proceed to join the fashionables in the bazaars or in Bond-street, let us station ourselves on London-bridge, and look down the river, where a forest of masts extends for the space of four miles. Here, I confess, London is the finest of capitals, and the Seine is but a streamlet in comparison with the Thames. We must next pay a visit to Blackfriars-bridge, which has not yet received its new name of Pitt's-bridge, which some persons proposed giving it in honour of the illustrious rival of Fox.

From Blackfriars Bridge we have a view of St. Paul's, the Tower, the Monument, Somerset House, Westminster Abbey, and more than thirty churches. Westminster Bridge, which was the handsomest in London before the construction of

Waterloo Bridge, was the work of a Frenchman. But Waterloo Bridge is not only the finest in London,' it may be called the most magnificent in the world.* At sight of its elliptical arches, suspended so lightly and elegantly from one bank of the river to the other, one cannot feel astonished at Canova having said, that he would willingly resign all his glory for the honour of having created tha master-piece of Rennie's genius.

But we are now beyond the boundaries of the city, and have reached Charing-Cross, in the centre of which stands the equestrian statue of the unfortunate Charles I. Further on, in a sort of court-yard behind Whitehall, the palace from which the monarch was conducted to the scaffold, is the statue of the last king of the house of Stuart, James II., which was erected to him the year before his abdication. The pedestal bears simply the inscription of his name, and his title of king, which the new dynasty did not efface.

Proceeding westward from Charing-Cross, we enter the new part of London. In Pall Mall, the Haymarket, and Piccadilly, we meet with nearly as much noise and bustle as in the trading streets of the City; but the appearance of the houses is different, they are not so black as those in the east of London. The pavements, too, are wider, and

* Waterloo Bridge is 2890 feet long. It was completed in six years, and cost thirty-six million.

there is less elbowing among the foot passengers. In the middle of Piccadilly, there is a passage called the Burlington Arcade, which is similar to that of the *Panorama* or of the *Galarie Delorme*, and in Bond-street, from three to five o'clock every day, the prettiest women in London are to be seen visiting the shops, not so much, it appears for the purpose of making purchases, as to try the patience of the shopkeepers. The adjacent streets, up to Grosvenor-square, and on the other side of the wide and busy street called Oxford-street, are filled with the houses of persons of fashion. The *hotels* of our nobility and gentry have uniformly a *porte-cachère* in front, but in London, where there are no such things, the coach-houses and stables are built in mews or blind lanes, running behind the principal streets.

I have fixed my abode neither in the fashionable districts nor in the city, but in a central situation, in the neighbourhood of the theatres, which I am in the habit of frequenting. I am for the present in a furnished house, kept by a maiden lady of a *certain age*, which leaves you full liberty to ascribe to her any amount of years from thirty to forty. She keeps a boarding-house, which is occupied by young men, of whose professions I have hitherto been unable to form any conjecture. I have not been troubled with questions myself, and a stranger should be at least as discreet as those among whom he may be placed. Our meals are of a nature to satisfy the heartiest

appetite; the dinner, I mean, for our breakfast consists of tea, of which our amiable hostess pours out as many cups as she is asked for.*

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LETTER XXV.

TO MADAME SAINT G——S.

MADAME,

You tell me that I shall soon forget, in the dining and drawing-rooms of John Bull, your lively dinners and entertaining evening parties. Have you yourself forgotten that the yellow-visaged *spleen* is reckoned among the penates of old England, and is almost always visible to foreigners, however cheerful the smiles with which they are welcomed? That I may the better answer for myself, I will give you an account of three London dinners, and a rout which I have attended. I made my *debut* at the house of a baronet, Sir Francis L——, who enjoys an income of 5000l. a year. The English baronet holds a middle rank between a nobleman and a commoner. Lady

* I here suppress some details which relate personally to myself, and which may, perhaps, be introduced elsewhere.

L——'s landau is one of the most elegant to be seen in the drive in Hyde Park, and the additional polish of a winter in Paris, would impart to her ladyship and her two daughters a portion of the exquisite grace for which you are so highly distinguished. They, however, profess to admire every thing French, and belong to that class of ladies, who have not sufficient national spirit to look upon our transplanted milliners as contraband. At six o'clock in the evening I knocked at Sir Francis's door, and could not help admiring the polish of the brass knocker before I let it fall from my hand. I also observed the name of the master of the house, and his title of baronet, engraved on a brass plate, which is a very general practice in London. I dare say you will suspect that my appetite sharpened my memory. I did not forget to knock one of those thundering raps, which announce to the servants the arrival of a *gentleman*. The footman who opened answered my question very respectfully, took my hat into a room on my right, and then transferred me, as it were, to one of his fellow-servants, who ushered me up to the drawing-room door, where he announced Doctor P——, pronouncing my name in rather an odd way. I made but a slight bow, by way of imitating the English dignity, and Sir Francis gravely advanced towards me, holding out his hand, and performing the brief ceremony of salutation, by cordially shaking mine. After a few trifling questions and short replies, he proposed introducing me first to his lady, and after-

wards to two of his friends. I accepted his offer the more readily, in the hope of being also *introduced to* his two daughters, whom I observed sitting by their mother's side. The slight glance I took of them on my entrance had produced a very favourable impression on me, but a formal introduction is indispensable here to enable any person to address another. I made a low bow to Lady L——, who received me with a very laconic speech, and a very gracious smile. Lady L—— is still a pretty woman, and I could not help thinking that the smile which overspread her countenance would have been amazingly becoming to her daughters. Alas! whether from forgetfulness, paternal discretion, or English distrust, I know not, but Sir Francis contented himself with presenting me to his lady and his two friends, and I despaired of being authorized that evening to utter a single syllable to either of his daughters, or three other ladies, who were of the party. It was not long before we went down stairs to the dining-parlour. I offered my arm to a young lady, who, I afterwards found, was called Miss Clara, and you will smile when I tell you, that I should have cautiously avoided entering into conversation with her, had not she, guessing no doubt the cause of my embarrassment, charitably opened the discourse, by asking me how long I had been from Paris. Her question, which was delivered in good French, but with an air of timidity, inspired me with confidence. However, we had already arrived at the bottom of the stair-

case, and I had only time to reply, without asking any question in my turn, when we were separated. I was placed between Lady L—— and Mr. John F——, one of the guests with whom I was authorized to exchange a few words. There was so little difference between Sir Francis's dinner and those of Paris, that I shall not describe it to you. I shall, however, bring home, for the use of your cook, the receipts for a *pudding*, and one or two other real English dishes. During the courses some cool French wines were introduced after the Port, Sherry, and Madeira, which is drank without being mixed with water. You may, if you please, quench your thirst with a draught of ale, or table beer of a very agreeable flavour. These beverages are asked for separately; but, as for the wine, you must wait, at least for the first glass, till the master of the house, or your neighbour, invite you to drink with him, and which it would not be considered polite to decline. The bottle is sent to you, you fill your glass, and make a slight inclination of the head before you taste it. You then challenge your neighbours in your turn, and are accepted with the same formality. These libations are continued until the arrival of what may be termed the first desert, in which cheese is frequently brought on the table alone. The cloth is then removed, and the table is covered with different kinds of fruit, from the garden and hot-house. The challenges to take wine are now at an end, but the bottles are circulated round the table, and stopped in their passage by each of the

guests. The ladies do not forget that Noah planted the vine for their sex as well as for ours. I must, however, for the honour of French gallantry, take this opportunity of refuting the accusation of the famous General Pillet, who, in return for having been kept for several years on a water regimen on board the prison-ships, had the impudence to publish, that the English ladies were often to be seen staggering, like the priestesses of Ariadne's lover.

The ladies soon deserted the dinner table, and adjourned to the drawing-room to prepare tea. Hitherto the conversation had been by no means general; each person had addressed himself only to his next neighbour, but no one had thought proper to enter into a regular discussion on any particular subject, or to engross the attention of the company by the narration of anecdotes. On the departure of the ladies, the gentlemen drew closer together, and the bottles were freely circulated. The conversation was maintained with greater ease and decision. At one moment it seemed even to grow warm. Politics were introduced, and a schism took place between the speakers. We had our ministerial and our opposition parties. Some made long-winded speeches, and others laconic replies. In short, we had a parliament in miniature, but undisturbed by disorder or personality. The discussion was conducted with the cool dignity which Englishmen occasionally assume, particularly when they would

reproach the French with not knowing how to *sit still.*

The company did me the honour to request me, on two occasions, to cite the opinion of some of our distinguished statesmen, and, I must own, that, regarding myself for a moment as a sort of neutral plenipotentiary, present at the debates of a legislative assembly, and wishing to prove myself a worthy representative of my nation, I made use of a little charlatanry, to give importance to my part, and weight to my replies. I had occasion to quote Mirabeau, Barnave, and other orators, whose speeches have resounded throughout Europe, and I took good care to accompany each of those names with a characteristic sketch of their particular talent. I did this on purpose to show that the French know how to appreciate their Foxes and Burkes as well as the English, for among the continual exaggerations of Englishmen, on the subject of our frivolity of character, they are sure to say, whenever we call their attention to one or two of our deep-thinkers, that whether they are French or not, we know not how to value them. Though there is, perhaps, a good deal of pedantry in those formal debates around the table, I listened to them with a considerable pleasure, and I could not help regarding this conflict of individual opinions as a good introductory exercise for the parliamentary discussions, in which all men of fortune in the three kingdoms are so anxious to bear a part. Thus, it not unfre-

quently happens, that a newly elected member of parliament proves himself a finished orator, even in what is termed his maiden speech.

About ten o'clock, Sir Francis rose, and we followed him to the drawing-room.

We found the ladies seated round a table, ready to partake of the *elemental tea.* Miss L....., Sir Francis's eldest daughter, was the Hebe who prepared the Chinese nectar. The offer of a cup was the first sentence I obtained from her pretty lips. I took several, and Miss Clara at length observed that I was half an Englishman. I did not let slip the opportunity which this observation afforded me of entering into conversation with her, and I took possession of a chair by her side. I assure you, Madam, that I was, for a quarter of an hour, delighted with her wit and information. But conversational talent was not the only accomplishment Miss Clara possessed; she was soon summoned to the piano, and sang an air from Tancredi with taste and correctness. Rossini is the musical god of the London as well as the Paris drawing-rooms. Almost all the other young ladies sang after Miss Clara. The gentlemen, with whimsical gravity, applauded what the half of them had not even listened to; for the company subdivided themselves into little groupes, conversing together seriously and in a low tone of voice. This sort of aside conversation was only interrupted at intervals by an applauding nod or a laconic *bravo.* For my part, I was condemned to listen alternately to the two gentlemen to whom I had been intro-

duced; and as our conversation was of the most common place nature, I was not sorry when I saw one of them prepare to take his departure. I wished to retreat as well as I could in the English fashion, and imitating all his movements and half bows, I followed and joined him on the stair-case. I took the opportunity as we went down together to ask him a question, which, I confess, somewhat embarrassed me. I wished to know whether I ought to give a few shillings to the servant when he returned my hat, a custom which I had somewhere heard spoken of. He told me, however, that it was not usual to make any present on a first visit.

Thus, then, I have given you a description of a London dinner, and evening party, where I could not help occasionally regretting the want of the gaiety, frivolous as it may be, of our Paris dinners;—that agreeable interchange of compliments, called by the English the counterfeit coin of France, which serves to amuse the ladies, and to force a smile even from the gravest face;—in a word, that genuine tone of society, which, in spite of the character British surliness may give it, consists, after all, in setting every one at his ease.

I dined next day at the house of a citizen, which I found still more dull than the other. I could have fancied myself at a quakers' meeting. The dishes were fewer, and there was no soup, a luxury, however, with which I could readily dispense, for the English cooks put in pepper enough

to calcine one's palate. We did not remain so long at table as at Sir Francis L——'s, which was owing, I presume, to there being less variety of wines. The libations of tea were abundant, but what was extremely mortifying to your humble servant was, that the party being smaller than that with which I dined on the preceding day, there was but one groupe formed in the drawing-room, and but one subject of conversation. This was supported by three old ladies, who expatiated for two long hours on the profanation of the holy Sabbath in the towns of France. Had I been conversing with a clergyman, I should perhaps have pleaded for our catholic gaiety, but I must confess, Madam, that after having tried my ground, and satisfied myself that contradiction would be dangerous, I protested even louder than the old ladies against the indulgence of worldly pleasures on a Sunday.

In a visit which I afterwards paid to Lord T—, I was not disappointed in the expectation I had formed of meeting with something more like French manners at his house; for the aristocracy of England entertain a decided preference for Parisian customs. His lordship's mansion is fitted up in a style of magnificence, and his carriage, which I had already seen, appeared to me of the most splendid description. It may, perhaps, be said that the English nobility evince more splendour in their equipages, horses, and liveries, than in the decoration of their houses. For my own part, at least, I think the great hotels of Paris

far excel the mansions of London, which are but imitations of them. But the greatest charm of the English nobility consists in their easy dignity, in their unaffected affability, and, I may say, their prepossessing grace of manner. This last quality is particularly observable in the ladies, who possess the secret of rendering themselves agreeable without the aid of coquetry. These are my first impressions, and I trust I shall find them confirmed by daily experience. This elegance of manner is evidently the result of the taste, may I even say the passion, for society, which pervails among the higher classes in England. But perhaps I may, on some future occasion, make this a subject of censure, instead of praise.

I could have fancied myself in Paris during a great part of the dinner at Lord T—'s. In the drawing-rooms, which, in the latter part of the evening were very numerously filled, the illusion might have been easily kept up. At the same time I must own, that I should be very glad to have frequent opportunities of meeting as great an assemblage of beauty in the Chaussée d'Antin, or on the other bank of the Seine, as I that night witnessed. National feeling compels me to pass over in silence the many other merits which distinguished the ladies. I learned with pleasure that I should meet the greater part of them at a rout, next evening, at Lady B—'s, where Lord T— promised to take me.

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

You will doubtless ask me, Madam, what is meant by a rout?* One would really believe that the fashionable world of London was anxious to rival the tumult of the crowds which assemble at the doors of the theatres. A rout is a large assemblage of fashionables. The lady of the house invites her friends a long time previously, so that the *mob* may be as great as possible. The avenues of the streets are filled with carriages; the staircases, landing places, and apartments are so crowded with visitors, coming and going, that you almost despair of ever reaching the principal drawing-room, where the lady of the mansion lavishes her smiles on all who are fortunate enough to be carried so far in the stream. When, as they work their way out again, panting for breath, you hear them exclaim, "What a glorious even-

* I cannot refrain from noticing here a singular mistake made by the first French translator of Waverley. Sir Walter, in speaking of some Highlanders, says, that they were so robust and active, that they might very well have been the ancestors of some of those modern Celts who now enjoy the happiness of transporting the ladies of Edinburgh, in sedan chairs, *to ten routs in one evening*. This passage M—— has translated, "en aurait pu dire qu'ils avaient *reçu le jour* de ces adroits *phætons* qui conduisent á Edinbourgh les belles voyageuses en *chaises de poste*. Ces porteurs se mirent en *route*, &c. &c."

Waverley has, however, been retranslated for Gosselin's 8vo. edition.

ing!"—"What a delightful party!" Next morning they eagerly examine the columns of the newspapers, in search of the article headed *Fashionable parties*, and happy the lady who finds, among its valuable contents, a minute description of the dress she wore, written probably by her own hand, or that of her milliner. How delighted our Parisian coquettes would be to find the less spacious columns of our journals imitate the gallantry of the London newspapers, and attach as much importance to ladies' dresses as they do to political debates and the price of the funds! But, alas! the very *Journal des Modes* does not indulge in the smallest personality of this kind. After this, who shall say that we pay too great an homage to the fair sex?

The present period is the most brilliant throughout the whole year, for the butterflies of fashion; and it is therefore, by way of distinction, termed the "season." Every lady and gentleman of fashion is ready to risk suffocation at ten different routs in one evening. I certainly should never have expected to find, in a nation so noted for gravity, so violent a taste for society.

To hear the conversation of the ladies, the young gentlemen, and even grave statesmen, a foreigner might fancy himself among the most frivolous people in the world. The Hero of Waterloo himself is, in society, merely an insignificant fop. If the English aristocracy did not leave town, when the season is over, to lay in a fresh stock of vigour at their country houses, all their national

energy would be suffered to evaporate in the insipid atmosphere of their drawing-rooms.

The remark of a celebrated female writer on German society may, with justice, be applied on this occasion to the English. "A part of their time," says Madame de Staël, "is lost in dressing, in a manner suitable to these great assemblies, part is lost in the street, part on the stair-case, and part during a three hours' stay in the drawing-room; and it is impossible in these numerous companies to hear anything beyond the ordinary circle of conversational phrases. This daily exhibition of individuals one to another, is only an ingenious invention of mediocrity to annihilate the faculties of the mind. If it were agreed to consider reflexion as a disorder, to guard against which a certain regimen is necessary, it is impossible to conceive any better remedy than this insipid system of diversion—a system which renders it impossible to pursue one single idea, and transforms language into a kind of chattering, which men may learn as well as birds."

It cannot be denied, that to the higher classes in every country we must look for real elegance of manners. If the society of our nobility, previous to the revolution, was the most agreeable in Europe, it must be attributed to the exclusion of the commoners, who, though at all times distinguished for sterling virtues, are seldom able to acquire the cultivated graces of polite society. The French nobility preserved themselves, as far as possible, uncontaminated by alliances with the

lower classes, and admitted to their society only literary men, who brought with them the tribute of originality, wit, and flattery. Rich commoners were sometimes tolerated, it is true, but they for the most part paid off their reckoning in the ridicule they unconsciously suffered. There existed a positive distinction, as far as regards taste and manners, between the two castes. The revolution first brought them into contact, and afterwards blended them together, and since then, the line which separates them is by no means distinctly marked. The people still remain the same, but similarity of education has effaced the shades of distinction which before existed between individuals belonging to the two different classes, even in cases where they enjoyed equality of wealth. We are now no longer attracted or repelled by a class, but by an opinion. Here you find a marquess, who has secretly cherished his attachment to the *bonnet rouge;* there you meet with an upstart, who has learnt to share the prejudices of the old aristocracy. In vain would the nobility refine their ranks, and close their doors again upon the commoners. The latter have been so naturalised in high life, that they would carry away with them all the established usages of polite society. I do not know that the aristocracy have lost any of their elegant demeanour through their intercourse with the lower classes; but I should rather be inclined to think that they have lost nothing but their haughty foppery. Seriously speaking, have they any reason to regret

the loss of the marquesses of the last century, who amused us at the theatre after they had quitted the stage of real life, and took leave of us for ever when Fleury left us?

English society has long been in that situation to which the new manners of the republic and the empire have reduced our own. It is chiefly in the provinces of England that political institutions mingle the different ranks; while in London the aristocracy more decidedly maintains its sphere. In France, on the contrary, it is in the small towns that our petty nobles have endeavoured, since the restoration, to get upon the stilts again, and form themselves into a separate class.

The English nobility may well be satisfied with their own resources in the elegant drawing-rooms of London. At their country seats they renew their connection with the people, and there, perhaps, they still prove themselves worthy of having founded the liberty of the people. But it is only in the drawing-rooms of Berkeley and Grosvenor-squares that I have at present the opportunity of observing them. There, without the least prejudice to their character as a political body, I find them exchanging their formal gravity, their natural originality, their independence, their dignity, for the affectation of those frivolous graces which had hitherto belonged exclusively to the French character. They do not attempt to conceal their admiration of Parisian elegancies, which they appear to consider indispensable to the happiness of life. Both sexes certainly form

themselves tolerably well after the models they have incessantly before their eyes; but they remain, after all, but imitators, while they lose their national character in the attempt.

Thus English society, particularly among the upper classes, is daily losing some portion of its asperity in the eyes of foreigners, and one is continually tempted to say, a *Frenchman has been here before me.* A critical observer might still find here abundant food for ridicule, as, indeed, he may every where. If the sentimental lady is less frequently to be met with, her place is filled up by the coquette, who aims at producing effect by her continental air, and her affected ease and vivacity. The beaux of Addison's time, who are represented on the stage by the Amabels and the Wildairs, took their date from the court of Charles II., and resembled our fops of the same period. They knew how to disguise, by a brilliant and gallant bearing, the vanity of their pretensions, and all their frivolous tittle-tattle. But a fashionable air, elegant manners, the glory of taking the lead in the *beau monde,* and of dictating the caprices of fashion, are still regarded as eminent claims to distinction in England. Of this kind was the glory of the famous Beau Brummel, whom Byron calls one of the three great men of the nineteenth century, placing Bonaparte second, and himself third in rank. Madame de Staël was regarded as very unfortunate in having failed to please this Coryphœus of the fashionables. I know not into whose hands his sceptre has been transferred

since 1815, but I have already mentioned an illustrious general who is one of the candidates for it.

Next to the real gentleman, who, after all, is distinguished for nothing in his brilliant mediocrity but what is simply agreeable, comes the ridiculous flock of caricaturists. These silly coxcombs may find their prototype in Shakespeare. The fiery Hotspur has done justice to the dandies of his time in an eloquent tirade. The dandies of our days, with their stiff collars, cossack trowsers, and sounding heels, are to be seen lounging through Bond-street, at the time when the ladies go to make their shoppings there. These English *exquisites* assume an air of importance rather than pretension. There is nothing chivalrous in their manner. Instead of coming forward as protectors of the fair sex, some of them affect to treat the ladies with contempt, and they may occasionally be seen, linked arm in arm, and rudely driving a timid female from the footpath into the horse-road.

The city fops are merely copyists of the coxcombs of the west end. In 1815 they assumed a military air, in imitation of our own dandies, and false mustachios were employed to give effect to their pale, effeminate countenances. Moore has happily introduced into his Fudge Family one of these knights of the counter.

The whimsicality, or, to use a phrase of their own, the eccentricity which formerly distinguished certain English peers, has not yet completely lost its ascendency. Before the revolution, our dra-

matic authors kindly passed off this originality of our neighbours for generosity of heart, and even greatness of soul. True benevolence, like true magnanimity, has an air of simplicity and seriousness which is not incompatible with amiability. But while the anglomania prevailed, our dramatic authors and romance writers could not protect innocence or succour misfortune, but with the guineas of an English lord, whose character always exhibited an odd compound of capricious misanthropy, and liberal sentimentality. While the English were holding us up to the ridicule of Europe, by their comical caricatures, we were making John Bull the ideal perfection of human nature. Certainly every Englishman may be proud of Rousseau's Lord Edward! We have now, perhaps, fallen into the opposite extreme; but still we have the advantage of our neighbours in politeness.

The English themselves acknowledge that their eccentricity is often occasioned by the want of education. A certain noble lord makes a companion of his groom for the sake of singularity. One of the most innocent peculiarities of the English, and one which has given rise to many comic scenes, is that taciturn disposition which Ben Jonson has so ably pourtrayed in his character of Morose, in the comedy of Epicœne. This habitual silence was carried to a ridiculous excess by the late Duke of Devonshire and his brother, Lord George Cavendish. These two noblemen would pass whole months together without uttering

a word, and expressing their liveliest emotions by signs and gestures. They were both travelling through Europe, in the same post-chaise, when stopping one evening at an inn in Germany, they were informed after supper, that they could only be accommodated with a chamber containing three beds, of which one was already occupied. They made no remark, but quietly retired to the apartment. They, however, felt some little curiosity about their fellow-lodger, and quietly drawing aside the bed curtains, they took a momentary peep at him. They then immediately got into bed and slept soundly. Next morning, after they had breakfasted and paid their bill, the duke could not refrain from saying to his brother: "George, did you see the dead body?" "Yes," was the reply, and they both gravely got into their chaise and proceeded on their journey. Perhaps, madam, they lost a tale of horror by their obstinate silence.

The English generally endeavour to give themselves an air of independence by their whimsical humours, which are for the most part merely a trick to engage public attention. The man who pretends to brave public opinion is often a slave to it. There are some other general features in the English character which it would be interesting to point out; but lest I should be accused of ill-nature, it would be more prudent to support my observations by the remarks of some English writer. But, after all, this precaution is probably unnecessary, for if you reproach the English with any vice

or fault which they cannot deny, they immediately make a merit of it, and coolly reply, "It is in our nature. Our national character is marked by striking and distinct traits. The asperities of our surface have been compared to the well-cast impression on a medal; the French are like current coin, worn smooth by friction. We are proud, because we belong to the nation whose political pre-eminence is incontestable. Our pride is only the expression of conscious dignity, the dignity of the free man. We despise foreigners, whom we call slaves, as the republics of Greece and Rome regarded as barbarous all nations who had not the happiness, like them and us, to be burthened by an oligarchy, but at the same time enjoying the privilege of periodical saturnalia. It may be said that we despise the rest of Europe, rather than over-value ourselves. We should really be seriously sorry if the freedom of representative government should teach the French that they are our equals.* But if we are cold and reserved to strangers, we suffer the inconvenience of our unsociability. Enter one of our coffee-rooms, and you will probably find two Englishmen seated silently in a corner, instead of entering into conversation with each other. If, by chance, one of them, throwing off some of the national reserve, should venture to address a question to his neigh-

* It is curious to observe the joy expressed by the English newspapers of all parties, whenever a ministerial measure provisionally annuls any of the free institutions which we owe to the charter. Should a truly free nation be jealous of the liberty of others?

bour, the latter will put on a grave look, and return at most a dry monosyllabic answer, for two talkative Englishmen seldom meet under the same roof."

Thus does English pride justify and accuse itself in the same breath. If etiquette be necessary to any people, it is so to the French, who are perhaps too ready to make acquaintance with strangers. But we are regarded as hypocritical coxcombs by the English, who love comfort and hate constraint, who boast of their frankness, though it often degenerates into absolute rudeness, and who dread familiarity as the antidote to dignity.

LETTER XXVII.

TO M. D. H——.

I AM going to tell you about a young author, who, like yourself, is looking forward to a favourable turn of fortune, in the hope of gaining the double crown of Melpomene and Thalia. This young man is Henry B———. Encouraged by his frank and obliging manners, I ventured to question him respecting his circumstances and occupations, with more freedom than a stranger

is generally warranted in using. Curiosity is artful; and, adopting the custom of the Scotch, I sometimes answered one of his questions by asking another, as though I attached a certain condition to my reply.

Henry B——— was intended by his parents for the legal profession: but the demon of poetry assailed him, and as soon as he could escape from business, he repaired to the theatre to spend his evenings. Like Piron's Victor, he raised the ideal edifice of his fortune and glory on the scenic boards. He soon found it impossible to absent himself from the theatre on the first night of any new performance. He secretly exercised this talent in dramatic composition, but his productions were known only to a few particular friends. Encouraged by their approbation, he was induced to submit his labours to the decision of the public; but he found Covent-garden and Drury-lane as difficult of access as our Parisian theatres. Like Tobin, he was doomed to sustain numberless repulses. He however possessed the perseverance of the author of the *Honey Moon;* and when he found himself supplanted by rivals, over whom he felt a conscious superiority, he still cherished the hope of one day surmounting every obstacle. For several years he had to contend against that distrust with which theatrical managers regard the inexperience of all young dramatic candidates, and which leads them to prefer known mediocrity to unknown genius.

Hence arises in London, as well as in Paris,

that monopoly which excludes talent, and enables privileged authors to mask their poverty of invention by all the expedients of bad taste. Mr. B——— has had to contend against the prejudice excited by the unjust rejection of his works. He is inured to disappointment, and instead of being disheartened by ill fortune, he laughs at it. However, I cannot help thinking that in criticising the works of contemporary authors, his remarks are characterized by a certain degree of bitterness; and if I have sometimes made him concur in the objections which French taste urges against the English drama, I perhaps owe my triumph to feelings of dissatisfaction which he cannot entirely subdue.

He is fond of conversing on the state of the English drama under Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The following are a few of his observations on the subject. "The eminently dramatic age of Elizabeth," he says, "was not the golden age for authors. No theatrical manager could then afford to give a thousand guineas for a play. Five pounds was reckoned a good price for a dramatic production, and the most popular actor thought himself liberally paid if he got thirty shillings a week. In the theatre at Blackfriars, people were in the habit of smoking pipes in the pit, so that a thick cloud intervened between the audience and the stage. Instead of the thundering orchestra, which is indispensable for the gratification of the melo-dramatic mania of the present day, three violins sufficed to announce the entrance

of King Lear or Othello. The scenery and decorations were not calculated to atone for the poverty of many of the dramas which were produced by the rivals of Shakespeare. Beaumont, in one of his comedies, ridicules the indecorous conduct of persons, who, having paid twelve-pence for their admission, went and seated themselves on the stage, insulting the rest of the audience, and annoying the performers.

"But if we accompany the poet to his seven o'clock supper, at the celebrated club over which Shakespeare presided, and which Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, &c. enlivened with their wit, we shall find ourselves in a paradise of poetry. The literati of that age were not connected together by the pedantic institutions called academies. Authors and actors formed a sort of literary republic, in which each sacrificed the petty interests of self-love for the general advantage of all. An active co-operation existed between these sons of the muses. Beaumont and Fletcher, the Orestes and Pylades of dramatic authors, were not the only ones who entered into literary partnership. Shakespeare extended a helping hand to Ben Jonson, and to all whose inexperience required advice, without ever claiming the share he had in their success, or discouraging the second attempts of those whose first trials had proved unsuccessful.

"In more recent times, the stage has proved an honourable resource to men who have been obliged to live by their talents. Theatrical managers

and actors have not only courted the distinguished writers of the day, but they even sought out obscure merit. Otway, whose career was so unfortunate, enjoyed success only when he wooed the tragic muse; and Savage, when bereft of friends and home, found encouragement in writing for the stage. Farquhar was patronized by Wilks, and Garrick protected the humble Kelly. Our contemporary Kean disgraces his talent by absurd vanity and caprice. If he protect an author, it is with the view of engaging him to write a part in which he may shine exclusively. If he consent to perform in any piece which the managers have determined on bringing out, it is on condition that every part shall be sacrificed to his. This is doubtless one of the causes which deter men of eminent literary talent from writing for the stage."

Mr. B——— is personally acquainted with most of the performers, and is a constant frequenter of the theatres. When he points out any of the actors to a stranger, he never fails to add to their names a periphrasis, or at least an epithet, to denote their peculiar talent. In noticing the different performers, I will occasionally quote B———'s descriptions, when they happen to correspond with my own impressions; for I love to enjoy the privilege of judging for myself.

Probably you will now wish me to introduce you to the interior of Drury Lane and Covent Garden; but you must excuse me if I delay a little longer. Before I attempt to describe the taste of the English public in 1823, I must sketch a brief account

of the dramatic art, from Shakspeare's time downward, and by this means, when I speak of the performance of any old standard play, you will have some knowledge of its author, and the age for which he wrote; and I shall only have to acquaint you with the effect it produces on a modern audience. But to avoid forming a superficial opinion of the English drama, it is necessary to understand the taste of the nation and its writers, as it is evinced in their plays. The English, as well as the French, have literary habits of old standing, and prejudices of education and tradition, which long retain their influence over critics as well as authors.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO M. DUVIQUET.

The French and English, who, with regard to dramatic literature, are both defending a bad cause, will probably be some time ere they come to an understanding on the subject. Instead of discussion, they resort to invective, as is frequently the case when two parties are wrong in an argument. In France we are accustomed to regard English tragedies as barbarous productions; and in England French tragedy is never mentioned

but with a smile of contempt. Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, are continually blamed for unnatural ideas and language. Perhaps, shewing some degree of respect for the observance of the rules of Aristotle, the English admit that French tragedies are at least correct productions, presenting an harmonious whole, with some poetic beauty in the details, when nature is not absolutely sacrificed to forms. But the English, above all, pride themselves in having a national drama, and they assert that we have never been any thing but imitators, and bad imitators. I would change the question, and ask whether the English have any good tragedies written upon their own principles? I do not think they have. Admitting that our drama is less national than the English, it cannot at least be denied that we observe the rules we prescribe to ourselves, and which in France have become national. It remains to be decided whether our rules are the best.

In every country the dramatic art bears traces of the age in which it has been created. Authors must, in the first instance, conform with the general ideas of the public, by whom they are judged; and those ideas are only gradually modified or changed by the power of taste or genius. From the time of Orpheus, poets have been the civilizers of nations; but when Corneille and Racine appeared, the French had already, in a great measure, dismissed the traditions and prejudices of their ancestors. They were gradually relinquishing the somewhat rude manners which

prevailed during the civil wars of the League and Fronde, to imitate or admire the elegance and urbanity of courtier nobles. Classic scholars possessed the complete monopoly of literature. Louis XIV. by degrees extinguished the last sentiment of independence which survived the general conflict of religious opinions in the sixteenth century, and classic taste at the same time subdued all originality. The people were deprived of the right of seeing themselves represented in dramatic fiction; the language of common life was proscribed, and the simplicity and energy of popular expression were superseded by the monotonous periphrases of alexandrine verse. Of all the European languages, the French was thenceforth the most aristocratic; it became the language of diplomatists and courtiers.

The laws of English dramatic literature were established at a period when civilization was less advanced. The triumph of the reformation, that is to say, of democracy in religion, left independent ideas to the great mass of the people. Theatrical audiences asserted their right of judging for themselves, and required the dramatic poet to accommodate himself to their unrefined taste.—Shakspeare and his contemporaries wrote exclusively for the people. But in vain do the English assert that these writers emancipated themselves from all classic influence. They belonged to a pedantic age, in which even women studied the dead languages. They violated the rules of the ancients; but they disfigured their finest pages by barbarous

quotations, and often employed an almost unintelligible jargon, consisting of a grotesque compound of mythological allusions and indecent equivoque. Had they lived in a more ignorant age, they would have been at once original and natural; in a more civilized period, they would have preferred, like our authors, a more or less judicious imitation of the models of antiquity. The greatest misfortune of our literature is, that Corneille and Racine did not content themselves with employing the forms of the Greek drama in treating subjects from French history, before they naturalized among us the heroes, whose apotheoses had already been celebrated in the verses of Euripides and Sophocles. The choice of French subjects would have produced an influence on the style of the drama. The authority of Racine would have obliged our poets more frequently to call things by their right names; we should have had fewer sonorous or flowery periphrases, and a more strict adherence to nature in language and in action. The language of Racine's heroes is so *divine*, and their manners are so elegant, that our great monarchs, when introduced on the stage, have no alternative but to speak and act according to these foreign types, which is not very natural, or to descend to the rank of citizens, who are excluded from our tragedy. Had Racine commenced by writing national dramas, he would have made fewer concessions to that etiquette of style, which is so fine when employed by his muse, but so monotonous in the productions of

his successors. A more natural and a more purely French style, would have opened to him a wider range of subjects. Those who are acquainted with English versification will understand me when I observe, that blank verse may easily be rendered suitable to every style. Our alexandrine is too epic. Blank verse is to our alexandrine verse, what the iambic verse of the Latin tragic writers is to Virgil's hexameters.

It will probably be long ere we see a reform in our dramatic language. How many vicissitudes of manners and opinions has our system already resisted! In vain did the revolution confound all ranks together;—in vain did the representative government legitimize the ambition of every one;—in vain did the empire compose its social hierarchy out of new elements, and while it restored titles, neither destroyed equality, in the eye of the law, nor banished commoners from court or the drawing-rooms. The drama and the fine arts, in France, have still preserved their aristocracy of characters, and our poetic language its aristocracy of words. The distinguished men who have figured in French history, cannot be represented by the sculptor or the painter, or be introduced into a poem or a play, except on condition of their adopting the Greek or Roman costume,* and speaking a language different from that of their age. They must, moreover, be surrounded by dignified retinues, and their very servants must

* Is the picture of Philip V. an exception, which criticism has respected?

express themselves in an academic style. Yet, such is our inconsistency, that we admire the simplicity of the sublime Homer, and the primitive rudeness of his kings. The deformed Thersites, Eumæus tending his swine, and Irus begging in rags, are all very agreeable people. The stick of Hercules, dignified by the name of a club, may inflict poetic chastisement on the felons of his time. But Henry IV. must not appear with his doublet worn out by service on the field of battle, and he must forget his favourite phrases of *Ventre-Saint-Gris* and *la poule au pot*. He must not, in our little dramas, visit the honest miller Michau; that is derogatory from the dignity of a tragic hero; and Poltrot must no longer assassinate Guise with a prosaic pistol; that weapon is strictly prohibited by the police of Aristotle. But you will perhaps say, has that *police* prevented us from possessing a collection of classic master-pieces? Certainly not! I know and admire those master-pieces no less than you do. But is it a crime to regret the treasures of which Aristotle has deprived us? Is it a crime to regret that our history is not classic, and that our heroes cannot be made so, except in defiance of truth?

In England, catholicism laid the foundation of the drama, by the scenic representation of the incidents described in the scriptures. The reformers, in their turn, mounted the stage; but made it the medium of their arguments against catholicism. The first regular English tragedy was written in 1551; but the first dramatic writer

who ushered in Shakspeare, was Marlow, the author of a drama on the subject of Faust, and a poet of wild and frequently sublime genius.—But Shakspeare, in some measure, annihilated the past, in the history of English tragedy; and it must also be admitted, that he destroyed the future; for his school has not produced a single poet who has steered clear of his defects in imitating his beauties. Every thing has already been said both for and against Shakspeare; but it may be remarked, that the French critics are as correct in their severe judgments on that great genius, as the English are in their admiration of him. Voltaire has not exaggerated any of his absurdities, and his arguments would have been infinitely more convincing, had his language been more moderate. It is easy to prove that Shakspeare has not written a single good tragedy; but it must be confessed that some of his scenes, considered detachedly, are the finest dramatic productions that ever were created. That mountebank, ape, and savage, as he has been termed, is the first of poets and philosophers. Was he a scholar, or was he not? The question is of little importance. It has been remarked that if that extraordinary genius may be reproached with ignorance, it must be admitted that he could himself create a scholar. By turns lively, tender, pathetic, elevated, and profound, his talent was more universal and more original than that of any other writer. No poet ever possessed a more perfect knowledge of the human heart; none has, like Shakspeare, embodied tra-

ditional characters in a living form, and made them speak the pure language of passion; no other poet ever painted the supernatural in more graceful or more awful colours. I am impatient to describe to you the impressions I shall experience from the performance of such of his tragedies as are still represented on the stage; for there we must judge how far Shakspeare has succeeded in attaining the object which every dramatic author has in view, namely, illusion. It is in dramatic representation that the propriety of Aristotle's rules is most sensibly felt. It is gratifying to observe that the most enlightened literary critics of England have been the first to ridicule the Germanic and systematic admiration of Schlegel, who would have persuaded us that all Shakspeare's dramas were constructed on simple and philosophic principles, not excepting the *Winter's Tale*, in which Perdita, who is an infant in one act, appears of a marriageable age in the next.

Though Shakspeare was not, certainly, very anxious to enjoy the glory of having founded a school, it would appear that a sort of opposition arose against him, when we remark among his contemporaries Daniel, who was rather an elegant than an energetic writer, and Lord Stirling, who endeavoured to introduce a taste for the regular tragedy. The true representative of classic literature, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, was Ben Jonson, who clumsily translated the Latin dramatists in his tragedies, but evinced ad-

mirable originality in his comic productions. In his little lyric dramas, called masques, which were written for the amusement of the court, and which are remarkable for grace and harmony of versification, he gave free scope to his capricious fancy. But in regular comedy, he was rigid even to austerity; and in the art of scenic illusion, he shewed more ingenuity than any of his rivals. He was a moral painter, and was more anxious to adhere to the truth of nature than to produce comic effect. It has been observed, that Ben Jonson has unfortunately less frequently pourtrayed characters, than personified passions and feelings, and described the fantastic manners of his age, which are not very easily understood in ours. This objection is, perhaps, applicable even to his three master-pieces, *Volpone, or the Fox;* the *Alchemist;* and *Epicœne, or the Silent Woman.* What knowledge of human nature is displayed in the conception and developement of the character of Volpone, who revels in the triumph of his avarice and cunning! The parasites of the Latin drama must all yield to Mosca, the officious accomplice of his master's imposture. And in the *Alchemist,* how distinct, and how forcibly drawn, are all the characters which are grouped round the two quacks! What an admirable scene is that in which Sir Epicure Mammon proves to Surly the existence of the philosopher's stone, by the extravagant description of the treasures and luxuries he was to derive from it, and which he already seems to enjoy in imagination. The idea

of the *Silent Woman* is no less original. The singular humour of the taciturn Morose, who is disturbed by the slightest noise, is pleasantly contrasted with Truewit. Poor Morose, who barricadoes his doors, and pays the street criers for keeping at a distance from his windows, at length is induced to marry, because he could with difficulty extort a *yes* or a *no* from his hypocrital bride.—But he no sooner receives the nuptial benediction, which, by his express order, is pronounced in a low tone of voice, than his ears are assailed by his wife's noisy tongue, and he is almost driven mad by a concert of trumpets.

Following a system different from that of Ben Jonson, several authors of the same period produced comedies, which, like those of Shakspeare, are more remarkable for poetry and imagination than for the faithful delineation of manners. Their subjects were taken from the fashionable novels of the day, whence they borrowed not only their plots, but also their principal incidents. Their boldness of fancy astonishes and amuses; but they frequently launch into the most absurd extravagance. Their vagueness of conception often injures the habitual energy of their style, which is admirable in detached fragments, but terribly unequal. Indeed, their best productions may be termed merely imaginative sketches. Their language is frequently licentious, and their moral is not always correct. Yet, by means of energetic simplicity of expression, these old comic writers possessed the art of rendering the sublimest

ideas and the boldest metaphors intelligible, even to the most uncultivated portion of their auditors. In spite of their natural tendency to bombast, their declamation is tempered by a mixture of ideas and terms, whose familiarity would disgust our French ears. By a singular contrast, the tragic poet scrupled not to degrade royalty, and represented Lear deprived of his sovereign power, and clothed in rags. But the grief of the unfortunate king is not the less epic on account of the ridiculous but natural expression of his madness. At other times, a monarch in all his glory is pourtrayed merely as a common man, like the lowest of his subjects. In Shakspeare's comedies it seems, on the contrary, that the events of ordinary life are purposely elevated, by their alliance with poetry and romance. The melancholy Jacques, who is always seeking food for his benevolent misanthropy, expresses himself in flowery language and in verse.

In the numerous throng of poets who flourished down to the period of the republican revolution, the one who was least unequal, and who most uniformly maintained the dignity of his heroes, was Massinger. Beaumont and Fletcher possessed a superabundance of imagination, and their plays alternately present the extremes of good and bad. Thus they have been compared to cities, in which the stranger admires magnificent palaces, picturesque irregularity, noble monuments and smiling gardens, but at the same time containing wretched districts, which are the haunts of vice and misery.

From scenes worthy of these latter places, we are transported to others which remind us of the brilliancy of courts and castles inhabited by knights and ladies. To Beaumont and Fletcher we are also indebted for the grand picture of Caractacus, which inspires a feeling of respect similar to that produced by the sombre magnificence of an ancient fortress. The cynic Marston was a satyrist, rather than a dramatic author. Ford could paint no passion but love. Middleton, who was a better poet, and a more shrewd observer than Ford, fatigues by his figurative style and fondness for *concetti*. Decker left behind him only a few portraits. Webster, who was occasionally pathetic, exaggerated all known horrors. Shirley, who closes the list of these second-rate authors, was an elegant, rather than an energetic writer. He possessed the right feeling for genuine comedy, as is evident from his *Gamester* and his *Lady of Pleasure*, pieces which are full of interest, wit, and gaiety.

On the death of Charles I., and during the dictatorship of Cromwell, dramatic poets were proscribed with the fallen dynasty, or reduced to silence by ignorant fanaticism. Literature was borne down by the force of religious or political controversy.

It has been complained, that the restoration of the Stuarts introduced French taste into the literature and fine arts of England; —a circumstance, which, it has been affirmed, proved more fatal to

the English drama than the persecutions of puritanical rigour. It is true, that English tragedy thus became mere imitation; but certainly Racine's taste is not discernible in the declamations of Dryden and his contemporaries, who chose their models from the novels of Scuderi and La Calprenède.

There is nothing French in that mixture of licentiousness, poetic genius, and moral depravity, which characterized the writers of this period, who flattered the great for a morsel of bread, which was sometimes withheld through caprice, or given with insolent disdain. The romantic style was transferred from comedy to tragedy. Heroes were thenceforth merely bombastic lovers, discussing in laboured antithesis the conflicting claims of passion and duty. Heroines, in a strain no less declamatory, replied in speeches in which the *pour* and the *contre* were weighed in the same indispensable number of rhymed lines. The tragedies of Dryden and Lee, in spite of their nervous poetry and sonorous versification, are now dismissed from the stage. Otway's *Venice Preserved*, with the omission of many of its most licentious passages, is now occasionally acted with applause, thanks to the contrast of the characters, the animated dialogue, and the lofty character of Pierre, who is the true hero of the tragedy.

Otway was succeeded by Southern, Rowe, Lillo, and Moore. Southern was, in several instances, simple and affecting. Rowe is accused of being

too timid, because he is correct and judicious. His *Jane Shore* is, however, full of energy and pathos.

Fortunately for the cause of the English drama, the imitation of the French style proved more favourable to comedy than to tragedy. Dryden treated the subject of Amphytrion with some success; but in other comedies he is as feeble and immoral as Wicherley, Shadwell, Etherege, and other courtier authors, who flourished during the latter reigns of the Stuart dynasty. Licentiousness was not banished from English comedy under the house of Orange; but Congreve, Farquhar, and Cibber were at least distinguished for genuine talent. Of all the comic dramatists of that period, Congreve enjoys the highest reputation in France; but, certainly, Vanburgh, and even Farquhar, are superior to him. Congreve's plots and characters are equally artificial and improbable, but his dialogues sparkle with wit; both master and servant forget their respective situations, and are wholly intent on outvieing each other in clever sayings. They seem to understand that they are merely playing a part. Congreve forgot that wit is an ornament which must not be abused. He has, indeed, judiciously employed it to animate some of his scenes; but he has lavished it so unsparingly in others, that they degenerate into a mere succession of smart repartees.

Vanburgh was not less witty than Congreve, but he was more natural. The *Confederacy* and some others of his comedies, reflect no great credit on

the manners of the age in which he lived; but they are, nevertheless, faithful pictures. His dialogue frequently displays a degree of energy, ease, and gaiety, worthy of Molière. The *Confederacy* resembles the style of Le Sage in *Turcaret*. Farquhar was a more negligent writer than Vanburgh; but he was happy in his choice of subjects, and always amuses by the variety of his incidents and characters. It has been said that his heroes are portraits of himself. They are, like those of Congreve and Vanburgh, men of gallantry, who shew but little respect for the seventh commandment, and every husband who is not ready to repel them with a sally of wit, is condemned for a fool. Manners are changed in England; or, at all events, the fear of a *crim. con.* action obliges gallants not to make so open an avowal of their principles.

Pope has been unjust towards Cibber, whose *Careless Husband* is superior to any of Farquhar's productions. Most of his comedies are agreeable, and they have, in general, a good moral tendency.

Addison made an unsuccessful attempt in favour of classic tragedy. His friend Steele produced the first model of sentimental comedy, in his *Conscious Lovers*, and prepared the way for Kelly; while Lillo and Moore, choosing their heroes from prisons and gaming houses, founded what may be called domestic tragedy.

The following generation departed as widely from the imitation of the age of Elizabeth, as from that of Queen Anne. We see from Gold-

smith's Vicar of Wakefield, that Shakspeare did not satisfy the taste of the critics; and the works of Murphy, the elder Colman, Garrick, Foote, Hoadley, Morris, Cumberland, &c. shew still more obviously that a new course was aimed at. Garrick, however, understood Shakspeare, and by his magical acting, could identify himself with the original creations of the great dramatist; yet he avoided imitating him in his own compositions. The tragic muse, cultivated by Brooks, Murphy, Whitehead, Brown, Walpole, Young, Thomson, and even Dr. Johnson, produced nothing original. But comedy, though it became less brilliant in wit and poetry, followed a natural track, and painted the characters of common life, and the manners of the age. *Dashwood* and *Belgrove*, *Lady Jane* and *Lady Bell*, are accurate and finished portraits. Colman's *Jealous Wife*, and the *Clandestine Marriage*, the latter of which was written conjointly with Garrick, are remarkable for originality of character. *Lord Ogleby* seems to have been the model of Potier's *Ci devant Jeune Homme*. Goldsmith's characters possess still more gaiety. Foote's comedies approximate to the broad humour of farce; but Foote came nearer to Aristophanes than any other modern writer.

Cumberland's interesting plays may be ranked both among comedies of real life and sentimental dramas. Cumberland somewhat resembles our La Chaussée, but he possesses greater talent in the delineation of character. Mrs. Inchbald, well known as the authoress of the *Simple Story*, is in

the same style, but inferior to the author of the *West Indian*, and the *Wheel of Fortune*. Reynolds and Morton have administered to the bad taste for melo-dramatic composition. This taste was introduced by the imitations of Kotzebue, which became extremely attractive. *Misanthropy and Repentance*, or, as it is called on the English stage, *The Stranger*, drew forth as many tears in London as in Paris. Kotzebue was the false god, who was worshipped by all the English dramatists, except John Tobin, who remained the inflexible opponent of German sentimentality. But Tobin, who, had he lived, would probably have revived the romantic comedy, was buried in obscurity during his brief existence, and the illustrious Sheridan himself transplanted Pizarro to the English stage. It is true that Sheridan indirectly protested against foreign importation, by enriching the English drama with one of its best comedies, namely, the *School for Scandal*.

Sheridan, as a dramatic author, has sometimes been called by his countrymen the second Congreve. In France we should be inclined to place him in a still higher rank, by comparing him to Beaumarchais, who is so spirited and happy in the unexpected repartees of his dialogue. Sheridan has this advantage over Congreve, that he does not make his characters say witty things, merely for the pleasure of saying them. In general, the sallies of Congreve only excite surprise; but Sheridan, who is more natural in his originality, amuses, interests, and produces a higher comic

effect. But I may consider Sheridan among the authors of the present day, whose productions I shall judge of from seeing them acted.

If I may be permitted to draw a conclusion from this hasty sketch, I would say that the dramatic literature of England is decidedly inferior to ours. I cannot agree in opinion with those British critics who affirm, that in the tragedies of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, genius is cramped by judgment and art. Art was a natural inspiration in Racine. I again repeat that he is perfect when judged according to his system; but unfortunately, he made the French Melpomene move at too slow and measured a pace, assume too uniform an air of dignity, and speak in language too argumentative and pompous. Racine's heroes are fine Greek statues, always grandly draped, and worthy of the majestic temples of Athens. His successors fell into the error of forming their characters on the models of those demi-gods of a wholly poetic age. Certainly French tragedy might have been of a more national and popular character; but such as it is, the criticisms of M. Schlegel will not convince us that the rich and varied poetry of our tragic authors does not amply atone for their defects. They have also been successful in the natural delineation of character and passion. The grossest errors of Shakspeare would be easily corrected by a scholar; they are not worth consideration. In the knowledge of human nature, Shakspeare excels every other writer. He is Æschylus and Aristophanes, Dante and Rabe-

lais combined. Yet, in spite of all this, it must be confessed that he has not written a single tragedy worthy of the name.

In comedy, more particularly, our superiority over the English is undeniable. We should seek in vain in English comedy, for the light and graceful gaiety, delicate irony, shrewdness of observation, and ingenious tact which distinguish even our second-rate authors, whose dramas always present agreeable pictures of French society. These qualities are very rarely met with, even in the English comedies of the reign of Charles II. which were written by the half French courtiers of the time, such as Etherege, Killigrew, Wicherley, Buckingham, &c. In the higher class of comedy, Molière alone is worth all the comic writers of England. Our great dramatist is less various, but not less profound and natural, than Shakspeare. He is not understood by Schlegel; yet British pride willingly bends to pay the tribute of admiration to Molière, and asserts that his genius is English rather than French. However, the comic muse of England is rich in original creations. The English romantic comedies are often powerfully interesting; but they may be compared to fancy pictures, for there is more imagination than truth in the characters and language, and they have sometimes too poetic a turn. True English comedy, that is to say, the comedy of Queen Anne's reign, is characterized by an ingenious complication of intrigue, and a flow of wit in the dialogue. The more refined writers of

the last and the present generation have treated love purely as a sentiment; and they have sometimes happily brought into play the *dolci durreze e placide repulse* of that passion, which is so highly dramatic in the variety of its caprices and emotions. But we must not expect to find in English comedy the exquisite gallantry which exists only in French manners. English gaiety frequently betrays a touch of misanthropy, and resembles sarcasm rather than delicate pleasantry. Many of the striking characters of the English drama, are merely personal satires, and have consequently an air of caricature. The highly boasted *humour* of the English is, for the most part, merely vulgar gaiety, which stands in lieu of wit among a nation whose manners are devoid of elegance. English humour produces a burst of laughter, while French wit rather provokes a smile. Humour combines extravagant ideas and burlesque images—it overcharges its portraits, and exaggerates the absurdity which wit only half reveals. Wit often produces its effect by a single word; it excites less surprise, but it affords more lasting pleasure. The shafts of wit may be aimed without any derogation of dignity; but humour identifies itself with its victim. It is like a buffoon who degrades himself by the choice of parts, with which he must necessarily be associated.

The English drama also affords representations of individual whimsicality, and the ludicrous forms of fantastic disposition. These original pictures, which must not be confounded with ca-

ricatures, are daily becoming less numerous in English society. Civilization is gradually banishing that affected humour which furnished Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, and even more modern writers, with so many extravagant but natural characters.*

But I must now suspend my remarks on plays until I visit the theatres, where I shall, of course, have an opportunity of judging of the most recent productions of the English stage. I think, Sir, you cannot but admit, that I have made sufficient concessions to your rigidly classic taste; yet I nevertheless feel it necessary to entreat your indulgence in favour of a young author, who, though fully aware of the dexterity with which you can ward off a jest, has ventured to give you the surname of the *fossil man* of literature.

LETTER XXIX.

TO GENERAL BEAUVAIS.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

I AM about to give you an account of my visit to Drury Lane Theatre. But you must first

* There is no treatise on English rhetoric which does not contain a definition of *humour*. Professor Millar, of Glasgow, who has written a long dissertation on English gaiety, appears to me to have defined it more satisfactorily than any previous writer. I have to regret that I did not read Professor Millar's chapter on tragedy until after I had finished this letter.

submit to be conducted through the pressure and tumult of the crowd, which we had to encounter ere we could gain admittance.

In the morning we read the play-bill, which was suspended from a leg of mutton in a butcher's shop; and I purchased a sort of bulletin, which is sold for twopence by men who station themselves in the Strand, holding long poles with placards affixed to them, announcing that they have dramatic journals to sell. This little bulletin contains the names of all the performers, and the characters they are to represent. The distribution of the parts fills the first page, and the second is occupied by a short criticism on the performance of the preceding evening. These articles do not, certainly, equal those of Geoffroi, or our friend M. Duviquet; yet I shall read them whenever I propose visiting the theatre. They will help my memory, if not my judgment. We perceived in Brydges-street a very gloomy edifice, the front of which is half concealed by a peristyle surmounted by a statue of Shakspeare, if, indeed, I may apply the term peristyle to a sort of pent-house, intended to shelter from the rain persons who go to the theatre in carriages. We took a hasty glance at the principal entrance, which leads through a range of doric columns to a circular hall called the rotunda, and we entered by a narrow passage a lateral vestibule, which conducts to the pit. The inner door was not opened when we arrived, but a crowd had already collected. The name of Kean in the play-bill is as powerful a talisman

here, as the name of Talma in the Rue Richelieu. The crowd continued increasing round the door, and Henry B——, who accompanied us, smiled to see Alexandre and I ranging ourselves so as to file in in regular order. "Oh! you must dispense with that sort of ceremony," said he; "we must consign ourselves to the mercy of the crowd at our backs, and we shall soon be carried in at the door, which, at first will only be partly opened." Fortunately, I knew by experience that the sharp points of my elbows are excellent defensive weapons in a crowd. To stand for an hour at the door of a theatre, is always to me a severe trial of patience. Alexandre, who often complains of his *embonpoint*, was not better satisfied with his situation than myself, and he began wiping his face with his handkerchief. B——, who is in the habit of mingling with the crowds who thus besiege the theatre doors, after examining the countenances of the persons who were about us, desired us to move a little on one side. He was about to explain to us his reasons for so doing, when some one exclaimed in a loud voice, "Ladies and gentlemen take care of your pockets!" "Certainly," said I, "this advice is charitable, but not very polite. Every one must suspect that he is standing beside a thief, while, at the same time, his own looks and motions may be wrongly interpreted." "It is the police officers," replied B——, "who give this warning. They know all the pick-pockets, and when they see them they call out." "But when

they see them, why not take them into custody?" inquired I. "That idea is truly French," said B——, "but a pick-pocket has as much right to come to the theatre as you and I, and when you find his hand in your pocket, it is time enough to have him taken into custody."

At this moment the door was suddenly opened, or rather half opened. There arose a confused noise like the distant roaring of the sea, occasionally mingled with loud complaints and threats. We were among the number who first effected an entrance, and we left behind us women struggling and shrieking, and men quarrelling and contending with each other. A gratis representation in Paris, is the only thing which can afford any idea of the scene we witnessed.

On paying the price of admittance, which is three shillings and sixpence, we each received a little metal ticket, called a *check*, which passed us to the pit. We entered a spacious area of nearly a circular form, tastefully decorated and lighted by an elegant lustre, which, along with a blaze of light, emits a disagreeable smell of hydrogen gas, if I may be allowed to say so without offence to those who defend the plan of lighting by gas as the most perfect of all *liberal ideas*. We stationed ourselves near the orchestra, which is exclusively destined for the musicians, and seated ourselves beside a few of the women who had succeeded in gaining an entrance, and who, from their simple and decorous style of dress, evidently belonged to the middle class.

"The company," said B——, "in those three tiers of boxes immediately above the pit, is of a very mixed nature. Those tiers are frequently filled with persons who come in with free admissions, and, with the exception of a few private boxes on each side, they are open to ladies of equivocal character. Some of these nights we will go and take a peep into the lobbies and saloons, where, to the credit of English morality, you may fancy yourself in the arcades of your Palais Royal. I have no doubt that the annoyance of such disagreeable company contributes very much to deter respectable families from attending our theatres. We have but few private boxes, and in the public ones, as soon as the first act of the performance is ended, every individual has a right to claim a place."

"It strikes me as very extraordinary," said I, "that the English ladies, with all their propriety of feeling, do not make a point of adopting a modest style of dress, which would distinguish them from those females who attend the theatre only for the purpose of exhibiting themselves. For instance, look at that family in the box to our left. The old lady, I think, sets a very odd example to her daughters, in the display she makes of her wrinkled neck and shoulders. Look at those two ladies, also, in the next box but one, who are glittering in jewels! I really think poor King Richard must have enough to do, in the midst of such attractions, to confine his attention to his part. Again, on the opposite side * * *"

I was proceeding almost involuntarily with my observations on the beauties who graced the boxes, when B—— interrupted me, and assured me that those ladies, with some of whom he was personally acquainted, were of the highest respectability, and that there was not one of them who would not be shocked and offended to hear the slightest indelicacy uttered in her presence.

"This row of boxes," he added, "immediately above the pit, is called the *dress circle;* and it has been the custom from time immemorial, for ladies to attend them in full dress. The tiers above are occupied by females of the middle class, who are more soberly attired. Their object in coming is rather to hear and see, than to be heard and seen. You may perceive by the roaring and hissing of the many headed monster, that John Bull has taken up his station in the galleries. The provoking interruptions which will proceed from that part of the house during the performance, will give you frequent cause to regret the want of that decorum so conspicuous in the theatres of Paris. John Bull is silent only when occupied in admiring some showy spectacle, and then only when his eyes are not entirely obscured by the fumes of his porter."

"To judge from the enormous size of this theatre," said I, "I should apprehend your actors must be stentorian declaimers."

"Not at all," replied B——, "they are only

occasionally so. There is a calm uniformity in their general style of delivery, and they seldom launch into vehement bursts of declamation. Their acting is chiefly addressed to the pit, for they well know that the frequenters of the dress boxes are, for the most part, indifferent to the performance, and that the company in the galleries only come to see the last act of the tragedy, which usually terminates with a battle, or the after-piece, which is a mere display of splendid scenery and dresses."

My attention was here called off to reply to an individual who addressed me, and who, though in a complete state of intoxication, had availed himself of his privilege of a free man, and thought proper to come to the pit instead of the gallery. He then spoke to one of the musicians in the orchestra, who very coolly turned his back upon him. The next thing he did, was to lean all the weight of his heavy head upon a lady who sat next him, and who pushed him away, exclaiming, "shame! shocking!" He then fell into a profound sleep, which commenced with the first scrape of the violins in the overture, as if the orchestra of Drury-lane had possessed the soporific power of those of the French theatres.

This incident, and the disorderly conduct of the galleries, at once explained to me the reason why classic tragedies are more rarely represented on the English stage than on ours. At the close of the overture the curtain rose, and

Richard III. was saluted with three rounds of applause.*

I cannot imagine what effect would be produced on our stage by the exhibition of a crooked, hump-backed king discoursing on his own deformity. Such, however, is the Duke of Gloucester, as represented by Shakspeare and by Kean, who are both equally faithful to historical truth.†

When Richard says—

"The dogs bark at me as I halt by them,"

the actor accompanied the delivery of the line by an explicatory motion of his leg.

I will not attempt to give a detailed account of the whole of this play, which is one of those which Shakspeare called his chronicles. It has been mutilated, rather than arranged, by numerous alterations, and is one of the most irregular plays represented on the English stage. What I most regretted was the omission of the character of Margaret, who, in the original piece, appears like the prophetic precursor of heavenly vengeance, and seems to express the sentiments of the bard, in protesting against the crimes which the

* How different is this continued uproar from the tranquillity which prevails in a Paris theatre, where the lowest clerk, who, for his fifteen sous, purchases the right of hissing Atilla, remains as seriously seated in his place, as if he were attending an academic lecture.

† When this was written Talma had not played Richard on the French stage.

tragedy unfolds. But the part of Richard remains untouched. This character is so varied, that it comprehends within itself every thing calculated to display the talent of an original actor. Richard is by turns the politician, the warrior, the hero, the hypocrite, the buffoon, the hardened and the repentant criminal. Kean has completely appropriated the character to himself. The talent of this actor is very unequal. He is sometimes sublime, and sometimes extravagant, and he borders on triviality, at the very moment when the imagination is most powerfully impressed by his grandeur. These are likewise the characteristic traits of the finest compositions of Shakspeare. But even Kean's inequalities seem to be the result of art. He feels all that Shakspeare intended, and renders the most familiar and most poetic of the author's ideas with equal felicity.

Among the scenes in which Kean's acting produced the deepest impression on me, was that in which the funeral procession of Henry VI. comes upon the stage, accompanied by Lady Anne, the widow of the king's son Edward, who had been put to death three months before by the Duke of Gloucester. Richard, the murderer of her husband, approaches, commands the procession to stop, addresses Lady Anne, braves all her invectives, and feigning the most devoted love for her, succeeds in prevailing on her to lend a favourable ear to his suit, in the presence of the remains of her murdered husband's father.

In spite of history, and in spite of Shakspeare

and Kean, I had at first some difficulty to reconcile myself to this singular scene; but by degrees, the artful dissimulation of Richard almost made me forget, like Lady Anne, the presence of the bier. The seductive powers of the actor were complete; his voice, which is naturally somewhat discordant, was subdued to softness, his countenance was full of ardour, and his action full of grace, when, on his knees before the princess, he offers her his sword to pierce his heart, and then disarms her resentment by his ingenious flattery. It was the fascination of the serpent.

Richard forms the plan of putting to death the two young princes, who stand between him and the throne. In the course of a somewhat tedious dialogue, in which the prince of Wales discovers an understanding superior to his years, I actually shuddered at the ironical tone with which Kean uttered, aside, the well-known proverb,

"Wise too young, they say, do ne'er live long."

His sidelong look conveyed in itself a death-warrant.

The scene in which Richard affects repugnance to accept the crown, and appears before the lord mayor, between two bishops, as if he were more anxious for his spiritual welfare than for the vain honours of royalty, is worthy of our Tartufe.

Buckingham, who had at first been the servile instrument of his tyranny, hesitates at the proposition of a crime which his master requires him to perpetrate. From that moment he is doomed to

increase the number of his victims. When he comes to claim the reward of his services, Richard affects not to hear him, and at length repels his importunity by an equivocal answer, which, however, is sufficiently explained by the fatal tone in which he adds,

"Thou troublest me; I am not in the vein."

Meanwhile, Richard's tyranny occasions a rebellion. He is aware of the difficulties he has created; and he too well knows the extent of his danger, not to feel momentary alarm. But he is still capable of a powerful struggle, and there is something heroic in the last efforts of his courage. He no longer trusts to dissimulation, but shows himself in the frightful reality of his character. Kean often expresses, by a single word, the suspicion, hatred, scorn, and rage which agitate him; and when he exclaims,

"A thousand hearts are great within my bosom,"

he seems endowed with the strength of a whole army.

At length the crisis of his fate draws near. The remorse of a guilty conscience conjures up the horrors of a frightful dream, and Richard wakes to give vent to his terror in a wild incoherent speech. Though subdued by an invisible power, he still preserves an air of tranquillity in the midst of his dejection; and when he receives the note, in which the enemy insults him in the anticipation

of his defeat, he lets it fall from his hands with the most disdainful and dignified indifference.'

The battle represented on the stage is like the canto of an epic poem put into action. In the heat of the conflict, Richard finds all his energy restored. "A horse," he cries,

> ——— "a horse! my kingdom for a horse!
> I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
> Five have I slain to-day instead of him."

The two rivals meet and cross their swords. Victory remains long undecided between them, while they each give proofs of high courage and skill. This is a real encounter of arms, or at least it is one so perfectly counterfeited, that even a French audience would forget its accustomed gravity, and burst into a tumult of applause. The part of Richmond was supported by a Mr. Cooper, a person of a very graceful figure, which was rendered still more striking by the effect of his helmet, coat of mail, &c. Cooper managed the foil with great dexterity, but the astonishing address and activity of Kean would undoubtedly have earned him the victory, but that the irrevocable laws of the drama required him to die by the hand of Richmond. He fell with dignity, amidst the applause of the whole theatre. In the mean time, the combat had almost put the tragedy out of my head, and I could easily have persuaded myself that I was witnessing the defeat of a knight, at one of the tournaments of the middle ages.

Kean is the only actor I have spoken of in

Richard III., because, in fact, the whole piece rests upon him, not only from the almost exclusive importance of his part, but from the insignificance of the performers about him, who are admirable representatives of those courtiers without character, by whom tyranny naturally wishes to be surrounded. At Covent Garden one may see three tragic actors rivalling each other: at Drury Lane, Kean stands alone. The actresses in particular, are almost as insignificant at the latter theatre, as those of the Rue Richelieu, and reminded me of Bourgoin's whining declamation. None of them, indeed, utter those horrible shrieks, with which Mademoiselle Duchesnois tears her unfortunate lungs to pieces; but at the same time not one of them can breathe forth those pathetic tones, by which that actress occasionally reconciles us even to her defects. The monotonous delivery of the inferior actors of the English stage, gives to the varied measure of Shakspeare the melancholy cadence of our alexandrines, and reminded me of the perpetual drawling chorus of some of our old ballads.

Great advantages are, of course, enjoyed on such a stage, by an actor who has to perform a part like Richard III., and who is able to give proper effect to it! It must be confessed that Kean displays, throughout its performance, extraordinary energy and truth in the management of his countenance, voice, and action. His bitter words and terrific glances go like a poignard to the heart. His attitudes are always such as a

painter would employ in representing a similar subject, and yet they seem not so much the effect of study, as the natural expression of passion. But I must see Kean once more, at least, before I shall be qualified to pass a decided opinion on his talents.

The piece performed after Richard III. was the *musical extravaganza*, as it is called, of Don Giovanni in London. The hero is first discovered in the infernal regions, under the form of Madame Vestris, a very favourite actress. Molière's Don Juan is converted into a mischievous young rake, who makes it his business to disturb the peaceful government of Pluto. The prince of Tartarus expels him from his dominions, and Juan, on taking his departure, charitably carries off with him three London ladies, whose husbands are, in the mean time, consoling themselves for their loss by copious libations with Leporello. The only comic scene, and even that is not a new one, which occurs in this dramatic monstrosity, is that in which these topers (who, by the bye, are admirable caricatures) are surprised by the resuscitation of their better halves, who interrupt them in the midst of one of their drinking choruses, and lead them very coolly by the ears into their respective shops.

"It is a pity," observed B——, "that Harley, who is now performing Leporello, should throw away his talents so frequently on farce. This piece is written by Moncrief, whose productions,

though they are tolerated here, would be hissed off the boards of your Boulevard theatres.

"Giovanni in London is his *chef d'œuvre*, and yet I will defy any one to point out a single instance of sentiment, wit, or gaiety in the dialogue. The piece has neither plot nor character, and you must have observed, that there was an actress introduced in one of the scenes, merely to sing a popular song, without having any part assigned her."

Henry was in the right. Don Giovanni in London is a most absurd production; and it is distressing to see Harley reduced to the footing of a pantomimic buffoon, by the poverty of the part he has to support. Harley has an admirable comic countenance, an air of easy assurance, and a degree of bustling activity, which would make him an excellent Scapin on our stage. He is very clever in giving effect to the burthen of a song, by running it over with singular rapidity.

LETTER XXX.

TO MAHOMET OF CYPRUS, SUPERINTENDENT OF HIS HIGHNESS'S THEATRES.

In spite of the satires of Scarron, Le Sage, Smollet, &c. just as they frequently are, I have always

had a partiality for players. In my younger years, when I was happy in many illusions, from which I have only to regret having been awakened, I used to picture the gay children of Thespis surrounded by every pleasure, and identified with the heroes, whose existence they nightly revive for the space of a few short hours. I used to be continually urging reasons good and bad against the prejudice which banishes actors from the better part of society, and thus forces them to adopt the vices with which they are reproached. At all events, I never expected to find that this illiberal caprice existed in the *land of freedom.* I have often indulged in the hope of making a pilgrimage to the tombs of Mrs. Oldfield and Garrick, which are erected among the monuments of kings, by those islanders whom I pictured to myself as a nation of philosophers; but who, with respect to practical philosophy, are, perhaps, like others, merely a nation of *quacks.* All our French prejudices against actors are cherished in full force by the English, who certainly set up a false pretence of disclaiming these prejudices, when they boasted of having erected a funeral monument to their Roscius. The subscriptions of a few individuals must not be regarded as the homage of a nation. The sarcophagi of Oldfield and Garrick are but a feeble expiation of the prejudices to which English, as well as French, actors are subjected.

How many institutions, shameful in their origin, now claim respect, while the brotherhood of the

ministers of Thalia are treated with insult and disdain, though they were primitively connected with our religion. In France, they are excluded from our churches, and even denied the rites of Christian burial. In England, they are in some measure outlawed, and are liable to be punished as rogues and vagabonds.

> "These are monarchs none respect,
> Heroes yet an humbled crew,
> Nobles whom the crowd correct,
> Wealthy men whom duns pursue;
> Beauties shrinking from the view
> Of the day's detecting eye;
> Lovers, who, with much ado,
> Long forsaken damsels woo,
> And heave the ill-feign'd sigh."
>
> CRABBE.

There is, however, an exception in favour of *their Majesty's Servants*, which is the title assumed by the performers belonging to the theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The English actresses, too, have a better chance than the French one's of marrying noblemen, and such an occurrence is looked upon here as a sort of civil baptism, which washes away the original stain. Why should this sacrament have more virtue in England than in France? When a woman of equivocal character gets married here, her husband is said to make an *honest woman* of her: this phrase, you know, occurs in the Vicar of Wakefield. The aristocracy of talent also invests English actors with all its privileges, and Garrick was

on a footing of familiarity with the most distinguished noblemen of his time.

Henry B—— yesterday took me to a tavern near Covent Garden, where several actors, with whom he is acquainted, are daily in the habit of dining. I amused myself by trying to guess from their looks and manners the line of characters they were each accustomed to sustain, and, by degrees, I mingled in their conversation. Some had visited Paris, and appeared to be very tolerant in their criticisms on our theatres. They all dined either separately or two together; but after the cloths were removed, they assembled round a circular table, each furnished with his wine decanter, where they sat drinking and conversing until past eight o'clock. I found these English actors very agreeable companions. They were on terms of perfect good humour with all mankind, except their managers, against whom they all joined in a chorus of complaint. This, you know, is the way in Paris. But, I say again, I love the children of Thespis—I admire their amusing conversation, enriched, as it ever is, with interesting anecdote, their gay philosophic way of viewing the world, and their good-natured readiness, when in company, to sing or to recite whenever they are requested to do so.

Familiarity with the stage gives to actors the valuable tact of avoiding dullness, even when going through the details of a long story. The tragic hero himself is not an insipid haranguer. Instead of launching into declamation, he prefers

an ingenious sally or an interesting anecdote. The memoirs of actors are delightful books. They almost always present an union of the prosaic details of real life, with the generous inspirations of the artificial or romantic existence which is described by poets. To this contradiction, the inconsistencies and errors of actors may frequently be traced. I can never be convinced that the mechanical repetitions of the same phrases, render them indifferent to the noble sentiments they express. Shakspeare, who was himself an actor, makes old Polonius say, in allusion to one of the players in Hamlet:

"Look, whether he has not turn'd his colour, and has tears in 's eyes."

After proposing that the company should drink the health of Shakspeare, I took the liberty of asking his majesty's servants why, in their performances, they so frequently varied from the text of the immortal bard? Our tragedians, I added, would expose themselves to the resentment of the pit, if they presumed to substitute one word for another in a play of Corneille or Racine.

M——, one of the performers who were present, frankly acknowledged, that he believed a French audience to be better acquainted with Racine and Corneille, than the frequenters of the English theatres are with Shakspeare. Do the English, then, really offer to Shakspeare the worship of ignorant superstition? Do they admire

him merely on the recommendation of critics? The truth is, that the affectation of moral purity, which is now so much in vogue, has caused Shakspeare to be proscribed as too licentious a writer; and a mutilated edition of his works has recently been published by a friend of decorum, under the title of the *Family Shakspeare*. As to those plays which Garrick revived on the stage, he not only abridged them, but he even disfigured their style; and Garrick's alterations have, in their turn, been disfigured by his successors. The performers, however, are compelled to study their parts exclusively from the *corrected* editions of Shakspeare; for as the mass of an English audience is acquainted only with the phrases which are registered in the prompt-book, a restored line might, by chance, be deemed a profanation, and incur serious disapproval.

One evening, when Garrick was playing Macbeth, he was suddenly plunged into a fit of abstraction, and repeated several passages of the original text of Shakspeare. The astonished audience concluded, that led away by the enthusiasm excited by his own admirable performance, he had perfectly identified himself with the character, and was actually delivering an extempore part. When the messenger entered to announce the advance of the English army, Macbeth addressed him in the following ungracious terms:

> The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon,
> Where got'st thou that goose look?

When Garrick returned to the green-room, one of the performers said to him—"My dear fellow, where in the world did you get that blustering speech with which you thought proper to amuse the galleries? I assure you, any one but Garrick would have been hissed off the stage for such a blunder."

Among the party at the tavern where I dined, there was a dramatic veteran whose age gave him the privilege of being more talkative than the rest, and to whom B—— drew my attention, by informing me, that he was a pupil of Garrick. He had, at one time, enjoyed a certain degree of celebrity, through his personal resemblance to the English Roscius; but owing to the unjust comparison to which that resemblance exposed him, he was obliged to withdraw himself from the too fastidious critics of London, and lead the wandering life of a provincial actor, which he described in truly miserable colours. He dwelt with pleasure on the period when he first entered upon his theatrical career, and became connected with those whom he termed, "the brilliant satellites of the great dramatic planet." "The actors of the present day," continued he, "frequently complain, that the higher classes of society desert the national theatres for the sake of listening to Italian Opera singers. In our time, we knew how to triumph over these caprices of fashion; because we ourselves mainly contributed to form the taste of our age. The *bon mots* of the green room were repeated in the drawing-rooms of the nobility,

and Garrick, Quin, Foote, and Palmer, will be handed down to posterity, not only as great actors, but also as distinguished wits. I knew Powell, Mossop, Macklin, Clive, Pritchard, and Woffington, and I have seen the great Barry. I saw him play *Othello*, in which he appeared to be inspired with all the ardour of his youth; but in a few years after, he was too old even for King Lear. In Mark Anthony, in Romeo, and, indeed, in any of the lovers of tragedy, Barry has never had an equal. His voice was so soft and musical, that he used to be called, *silver-tongued Barry*, or the *melodious swan*.

"The dignity and elegance of his figure gave him a great advantage over Garrick, whose rival he openly avowed himself. For twelve successive nights they both performed Romeo at the two different theatres. In all the love scenes, and particularly in the balcony scene, the critics gave the preference to Barry; but Garrick was declared to excel in the first act, in the scene with the friar, and in the concluding scene of the tragedy. Garrick subsequently challenged Barry in Othello; but without success, though several good judges admitted that he developed in the character beauties which had hitherto been unknown. His diminutive person was unfavourable to him, and it occasioned Quin to pass a fatal joke at his expense. Some of Hogarth's pictures, which present such admirable traditions of manners and costume, shew that it was the fashion of the time for ladies of fashion to have in their service a little negro

boy dressed in a fantastic style. This little page used to be employed to carry his mistress's prayer-book to church, or to act the part of Ganymede at the tea-table. Quin and a party of actors were breakfasting one morning at Lady M——'s—'. How did you like Garrick in Othello last night?' inquired her ladyship. 'The little man played the part very well,' replied Quin, 'but he looked exceedingly like your little Pompey, who is now coming to hand me my tea.' Garrick was so afraid of being called little Pompey, that he abandoned *Othello* for *Iago*, a character in which he excited universal admiration. But Garrick was, after all, superior to Barry in most parts. A quatrain, which was written on their performance of King Lear, decides the question of their merits in that particular character:

"The town has found two different ways
To praise the different Lears;
To Barry they give loud huzzas,
To Garrick only tears."

I recollected having read in some life of Garrick that that eminent actor frequently evinced a petty jealousy and irascibility of disposition. I mentioned this to the veteran performer whose remarks I have just quoted. He acknowledged the fault that had been imputed to his distinguished master, and added the following anecdote: — "Garrick advanced in years without losing any of his reputation; but he became more and more jealous of it, and constantly dreaded the occurrence of any accident which might in-

terrupt or disconcert him when on the stage. From time immemorial, it was the custom for the musicians to leave the orchestra after the performance of the overture and the act symphonies, and to repair to the room assigned for their use, where they amused themselves by playing at draughts or chess, until the prompter's bell summoned them to return to their posts. It was not until the last year of his theatrical career, that Garrick found himself disturbed by the entrances and exits of the musicians, and they were consequently obliged to keep their places during the whole of the play. This regulation was particularly annoying to one of the violin performers named Cervetto, who had played in the orchestra for the space of forty years. He had seen Garrick so repeatedly in all his different characters, that he no longer felt any interest in his performance, and one evening, on the rising of the curtain, he laid down his bow and fell into a profound sleep. The play was *Macbeth*. You have, of course, seen your favourite Talma in the character, and you must know the powerful effect he produces when he exclaims:

'Arrête donc ce sang qui coule jusqu'à moi.'

"The audience almost imagine they behold a stream of accusing blood flowing upon the murderer. Garrick excited a no less awful illusion in delivering the celebrated soliloquy:

'Is this a dagger that I see before me?'

"On the evening in question, the interest of the

audience was wound up to the highest pitch, and perfect silence prevailed through every part of the theatre, when suddenly a loud yawn was heard, and Macbeth, amidst his terrors, was saluted by a general burst of laughter.

"On retiring to the green-room, Garrick gave full vent to his indignation, and he ordered the offender to be conducted to his presence. Cervetto attempted to stammer out an excuse; but Garrick overwhelmed the unfortunate musician with reproaches. 'It is scarcely credible,' said he, 'that one who has been so long connected with the theatre, should have been guilty of such conduct. You have absolutely ruined me: you have destroyed the glory which I have laboured forty years to acquire. Who suborned you against me? Who are the authors of this conspiracy? Your sleep was merely pretended. Or was the performance so dull as to put you to sleep?' At length Cervetto found means to utter a few words in his own defence. 'I assure you, Sir,' said he, 'my sleep was not feigned; but so far from being produced by dulness, it was occasioned by my intense admiration of the performance. The energetic truth of your acting completely overwhelmed and absorbed my senses.'"

This anecdote was rendered exceedingly humourous by the manner in which I heard it told. The old actor by turns imitated the tragical rage of Garrick, and the grotesque apologies of Cervetto, which at length conciliated the good graces of Macbeth.

He related to us several other incidents in the life of Garrick, and concluded with a just tribute of praise to the memory of his great master.—"No actor," said he, "ever did, or perhaps ever will, possess such universal talent as Garrick. He may, indeed, have had rivals in some particular parts; but who could ever perform like him, on one and the same evening, such opposite characters as Archer and Lusignan, Bayes and Benedick, a Country Clown and Selim, Sir John Brute and the Guardian, Romeo and Lord Chalkstone, Hamlet and Sharp, King Lear and Fribble, King Richard and a Student, &c.? What versatility of genius he possessed, and what wonderful contrasts, and what perfection he presented in every character he sustained!

'We ne'er shall look upon his like again.'"

I could almost imagine myself listening to an old amateur of the Theatre-Français, who had forgotten Talma and Lafont, to celebrate the apotheosis of Lekain.

LETTER XXXI.

TO MADAME GUIZOT.

MACBETH is one of the dramas of Shakspeare which leave the deepest impression on the mind

of the spectator, on account of the union of tragical situations with supernatural agency. At the very opening of the play, the imagination is powerfully excited by the aspect of the wild scenery, the apparition of the witches, and the irresistible curiosity awakened by their mysterious predictions. I am now fully convinced of the justice of the remark made by a celebrated dramatic critic, namely, that most of Shakspeare's plays lose very much in representation. I know not what effect would be produced upon us if the Eumenides of the Greek drama were suddenly to appear at the moment when Talma, in Orestes, fills the minds of his auditors with all the terror with which he is himself agitated at their approach. But the Weird Sisters, whom my imagination had pictured such as Shakspeare has pourtrayed them, were, at Drury Lane, only so many actors of low comedy.—Though Messieurs Harley, Knight, and Gattie have acquired a certain degree of reputation in these characters, yet they certainly destroyed all my illusions. I laughed like a child who discovers that his nurse has been frightening him with an idle tale. Talma's recital, which has been so highly extolled by Madame de Stael, would probably now only suggest to me the idea of a parody.

Kean performs Macbeth in a most masterly style, and admirably defines the distinction between the timid and undecided ambition of the Scottish general, and the proud and triumphant ambition of Richard III. Richard is actuated by instinctive perfidy and cruelty: he has no other counsellors

than his own ferocious and sanguinary disposition. He is disturbed by no compunctions of conscience —and when he has attained the object of his ambition, crime, which was at first only the stepping stone to his power, becomes his amusement. Macbeth is naturally virtuous; every wicked action costs him severe stings of remorse; but he is urged on from crime to crime, by the instigation of his wife, and by a sort of mysterious fatality. The predictions of the witches act upon him like a charm. His courage, which was at first so noble, becomes merely the blind energy of a disordered mind. Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, by her obstinate ambition and masculine perseverance, exercises over her husband all the ascendancy of a great mind. Her criminal thirst for power assumes an air of heroism. Yet she is not without some touches of feminine tenderness, and she excites a certain degree of interest through her attachment to her husband, and the feeling of filial affection which is awakened in her bosom by the resemblance of the venerable countenance of Duncan to that of her father.

Mrs. West, who is as beautiful as one of Guido's Magdalens, is, unfortunately, too much of the woman for the correct personification of Lady Macbeth. She appears particularly tame and feeble to those who recollect Mrs. Siddons. Of this celebrated woman Hazlitt observes, that it is impossible to conceive anything superior to her performance of Lady Macbeth. The dignity of her deportment, her expressive countenance, and the

exquisite tones of her voice, all combined to render her a perfect representative of the tragic muse. The performance of Mrs. Siddons was powerfully impressive in that appalling scene in which Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep. Her eyes were open, but "their sense was shut;" she seemed to have lost all consciousness of existence; her lips moved as it were involuntarily; all her gestures were mechanical; and she glided on and off the stage like a ghost.

Kean, in spite of all his genius, is not in himself sufficient to give full effect to the representation of this tragedy. The vigour and truth of his performance would be shewn off to infinitely greater advantage with an actress equal to himself in the character of Lady Macbeth. Kean's Macbeth is, upon the whole, a less perfect performance than his Richard III.; but he surpasses even himself in the scene in which he rushes from Duncan's chamber, after the perpetration of the murder. Shakspeare has not made Macbeth launch into one of those declamations of remorse which are, perhaps, of too frequent occurrence in tragedy. Macbeth enters, after the commission of the murder, overwhelmed by the weight of his crime; his knees tremble, and almost refuse to support him; his lips are agitated by a convulsive movement, and only half articulate the stifled accents of his voice. Lady Macbeth takes the bloody daggers from him and carries them to Duncan's chamber, where she lays them beside his sleeping attendants, to make it appear they are the mur-

derers. A knocking is heard at the gate of the castle. Macbeth trembles, and gazes with terror on his blood-stained hands. He has not power to fly, and Lady Macbeth drags him to his chamber. From that moment Macbeth seems to be absorbed in a continual dream. Amidst the splendour of his usurped greatness, his diseased imagination feeds itself on superstition, and the Weird Sisters, by their artful prophecies, excite his impatience and urge him to his destruction.

I was fearful that Kean would descend to some of those trivialities, which, though perfectly natural in Richard, would have compromised the dignity which a less bold usurper, such as Macbeth, must feel the necessity of maintaining. Familiarity would be utterly inconsistent with the situation of a king *de facto*, who, being conscious of his own weakness, and feeling his throne totter beneath him, naturally clings to any support, whether real or imaginary. Kean has evidently studied Shakspeare profoundly. He has philosophically analysed all those characters, with which, on the stage, he seems to identify himself by inspiration.

On the evening on which I saw Kean in Macbeth, Cooper sustained the part of Macduff. He performed this character very much in the style in which he played Richmond, and his fencing was admirable. He was very effective in the scene where Rosse informs him that his wife, children, and servants have been slaughtered by the tyrant, and where, on his friends wishing to console him

by the hope of vengeance on Macbeth, he exclaims—"He has no children!"

I will not attempt to analyse the piece which concluded the evening's entertainments. *Monsieur Tonson* is one of those insipid productions founded on absurd blunders, the author of which exposes himself to ridicule in attempting to entertain the galleries by a supposed caricature of the French. M. Tonson is an emigrant, who turns perruquier, apparently with no other object than to confirm John Bull in the belief that Providence has assigned to the English the honour of supplying Europe with clever heads, and to France the task of providing those heads with wigs. A coxcomb diverts himself by tormenting the old man, by exciting his fear and impatience; and poor M. Tonson becomes rather an object of pity than ridicule. I could not bring myself to laugh at the stupid blunders which were uttered by Gattie, his grotesque faces, or the accommodating easiness with which he suffered himself to be mystified. The performers of Drury Lane theatre seem to possess more talent for broad farce than for genuine comedy.

LETTER XXXII.

TO M. DESFONTAINES.

I HAVE seen Kean in Othello; but I shall not give you any account of his performance until I see the same play represented at Covent Garden. I subjoin for your amusement a few particulars, which I have collected respecting the Roscius of Drury Lane.

Edmund Kean was born on the 4th of November, 1787. His father was a tailor, and resided in London, and his grand-father, Moses Kean, enjoyed some reputation as a mimic and ventriloquist. Kean's parents, who were too poor to maintain him, procured for him, as soon as he could walk, an engagement at Drury Lane theatre, where he used to perform in pantomime. He was placed under the tuition of a celebrated posture master, who subjected his limbs to so many contortions, that they acquired wonderful flexibility. The English would, in all probability, have had a rival to our Mazurier, had not the child's health suffered by this system of training. His joints became distorted and deformed. By the advice of the faculty, all the remedies of orthopedia were employed, and his limbs were put into irons. Young Kean had before personated Cupid, in Garrick's afterpiece of Cymon; but the manager now gave him the part of a goblin, for

the perfect personification of which it was only necessary for him to conceal his fine expressive countenance. The child submitted to this metamorphosis, and endured the jokes that were passed upon his figure, with more philosophic cheerfulness than might have been expected. He soon discovered that he had to rely solely on himself, and in spite of his neglected education, he gave proofs of singular intrepidity and independence of mind. After performing until he was about five years of age, he was dismissed from the theatre for a trick, which excited the inexorable indignation of the celebrated John Kemble. That great tragedian, who was then manager of Drury Lane, conceived the idea of making some additions to one of the scenes in Macbeth, which was to be brought out with extraordinary splendour. He recruited a number of children, who were to represent a troop of fiends and goblins of various colours, and to dance round the cauldron in which the Weird Sisters prepare the charm that is to ruin the regicide. Young Kean was, of course, selected to personate one of these infernal spirits; but just as Macbeth entered the cavern, Kean pretended to stumble against the boy who stood next him, and pushed him down. The latter, in his fall, knocked down another, and in a moment the whole party, as if overthrown by a shock of electricity, lay prostrate on the ground. Kemble, who was always extremely anxious to maintain the strictest decorum on the stage, was completely disconcerted by this ludicrous occurrence, and he

immediately disbanded the whole troop of goblins, addressing a smart reprimand to the author of this infraction of the rules of the sublime. Kean felt his dignity wounded by the reproof of the manager, and he was not sorry to find himself released from his engagement. However, he was not long in the enjoyment of liberty. His parents sent him to a school, the rules of which, though certainly not very rigid, were insupportable to him, and he ran away and entered himself as cabin-boy on board of a vessel, which was about to sail for Madeira. He was, as may readily be supposed, soon disgusted with his new situation, and the severe restraint to which it subjected him. But escape was now impossible, and his only hope was to devise some means of getting himself dismissed. He would not have scrupled to neglect his duty, but this appeared to him not a very certain mode of gaining his object, and besides, it would have subjected him to an arbitrary punishment. He thought of feigning illness; but he was afraid of being put upon a short allowance of food. Deafness appeared to be the only malady which was at all reconcileable with the cravings of his appetite. He accordingly pretended to be deaf, and he played his part so ably, that the captain sent him ashore and placed him in an hospital, where, for the space of two months, he deceived his medical attendants, who declared that nothing but his native air would have the effect of restoring his hearing. He set sail for England on board of the same vessel, and he soon

had to sustain a trial which sufficiently attests his heroic firmness of disposition. On the night after the ship sailed from Madeira, a dreadful storm arose, the sea raged mountains high, and the crew gave themselves up for lost. In the agony of despair rather than in the hope of preservation, all endeavoured to contend against the fury of the elements. But amidst this scene of confusion and distress, young Kean never for a moment betrayed himself. He faithfully kept up his assumed character, and gazed with indifference on all that was passing around him.

He arrived pennyless in London, and the first thing he did was to seek out his uncle the ventriloquist. Moses Kean, who was a passionate lover of the stage, expressed a wish that his nephew should qualify himself for a tragic actor. Young Kean, however, thought himself better calculated for pantomimical performance, and the feats of tumblers and rope-dancers appeared to him the *ne plus ultra* of talent. After the death of his uncle, he joined a party of mountebanks, and made his appearance on a booth at Bartholomew Fair, in the character of an ape. The magical flexibility of his limbs surpassed all the apes that had ever been seen, he performed all sorts of gambols to the great admiration of the spectators, and, like another Proteus, he assumed every possible variety of shape.

But Kean did not long continue in this situation. As he advanced in years, he no doubt felt that he was destined for something better, and he

resolved to try his skill as an actor. A wandering life was suited to his independent turn of mind. He became a strolling player, and suffered all the vicissitudes to which that unsettled condition is necessarily exposed.

After some time, he procured an engagement at one of the provincial theatres, where he was frequently assailed by the animadversions of ill-natured critics. Irritated by opposition, and too proud to yield to the bad taste of a provincial audience, he determined to resent the unjust attacks of which he was the object, and one evening, during the performance of Richard III. when he came to the line,

"Unmanner'd dogs, stand ye where I command,"

he addressed himself significantly to the galleries. John Bull is not much inclined to shew respect to kings, whether on the throne or on the stage, and the clamour of disapprobation ceased only in the expectation of an apology from the actor. Kean, however, braved the anger of his auditors, and declared that the only proof of good sense they had evinced, was in applying the offensive line to themselves. This affair, which ended in Kean's dismissal from the theatre, probably contributed to hasten his appearance on the London boards. In the year 1813, the manager of Drury Lane visited the different provincial towns, for the purpose of recruiting a company to retrieve the fallen glory of his establishment. He saw Kean at Dorchester, he immediately engaged him, and this

celebrated actor made his first appearance at Drury Lane, in January 1814, in the character of Shylock. His debut made a great noise in London; but unluckily the manager of one of the minor theatres, who had previously engaged him as a pantomimic performer, now insisted on the fulfilment of his contract. Tragedy and farce mutually asserted their claims on Kean, though in a manner less pleasing than that in which Melpomene and Thalia are represented as contending for Garrick, in Reynolds's allegorical picture. The dispute was, however, speedily arranged, and Kean devoted himself to the service of the tragic muse. The managers of Drury Lane were not conscious of the full value of their acquisition, until the first night of Kean's appearance in the Duke of Gloucester. The admiration he excited procured for him a new engagement at twenty pounds per week, instead of two, a salary which could not be deemed too high for a performer, who, every other night, brought the sum of seven hundred guineas into the treasury. Kean received the most flattering invitations from many of the nobility; but he is said to prefer the company of persons in a more humble rank of life, and to be particularly fond of associating with the votaries of Bacchus. The presents he has received from people of wealth and distinction prove, that he is not supported by the suffrage of the galleries only. A subscription was raised, for the purpose of presenting him with a gold cup, and the name of Lord Byron was on the list of subscribers.

The celebrated Sheridan, being offended with the managers of Drury Lane, vowed never to set foot within the walls of that theatre, of which he himself was at one time manager. The high reputation of Kean excited his curiosity; but not all the praises that were lavished on Richard, Shylock, and Othello, could induce him to depart from his determination, and he contented himself with hearing Kean recite in private. He dined with him at the house of a friend, and so completely was he absorbed in the admiration of his talent, that he repeatedly allowed the wine decanter to pass him. Kean is, perhaps, the only man who can boast of ever having made Sheridan forget his bottle.

At length, when the hour arrived at which the public favourite was obliged to repair to the theatre, Sheridan could no longer resist the temptation: he went to Drury Lane that very evening, and bestowed his rapturous tribute of applause on Kean's exquisite performance of Sir Giles Overreach, in Massinger's romantic comedy of *A New Way to pay Old Debts.*

I have seen Kean in this same character. Sir Giles is a man who, by dint of unremitting avarice, has amassed so much wealth that his love of gold is satiated. Vanity then takes place of covetousness: he admires his own talent, and is a sort of deity in his own conceit. His self-love even finds an indulgence in the affection he cherishes for his daughter, whom he bedecks in jewels and costly apparel, with the view of marrying her

to a lord; for though he despises rank and titles in others, as mere empty absurdities, yet by a contradiction which is often observable in human nature, he flatters himself that in his family they will become substantial marks of honour. Massinger has endowed the selfish and arrogant Sir Giles with extraordinary energy of character, and to attain the new object of his ambition, he evinces the courage and perseverance which are usually the concomitants of greatness of mind.

Kean represents, with admirable originality, the avarice, pride, and ferocious inhumanity of this ably drawn character. Sir Giles Overreach is one of those heroes of common life, with whom Kean seems to identify himself more perfectly than with poetic heroes. He evinces exquisite skill in the manner in which he gradually works up the tragical effect of the last act, when Sir Giles, caught in his own snares and defeated in all his plans, breaks the last bonds which attach him to society, and vents his rage like an infuriated tiger. I never beheld any thing more impressive than Kean's acting in this terrible picture of the delirium of passion, the despair of disappointed vengeance, and furious hatred. Sheridan certainly could have no cause to repent having forgotten, for such a spectacle, his misunderstanding with a theatrical committee.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO M. PROVOST, PROFESSOR OF ORATORY.

"THE present Covent Garden Theatre dates its existence only since the year 1809. The building reflects credit on its architect, Mr. Smirke, who seems to have had in view to erect a temple, to be dedicated at once to Melpomene and to the muse of romance. This theatre, which has been so highly praised by some English writers, as a masterpiece of architecture, is evidently only a copy of the Temple of Minerva, the finest model of the doric order, amidst the grand ruins of the Acropolis. The principal front is adorned by an elegant portico, and in each of the lateral walls there is a niche, one containing a statue of tragedy, and the other a statue of comedy, admirably executed by Flaxman. Two bas-reliefs are also introduced, one representing Aristophanes, Menander, Thalia, Polyhymnia, Euterpe, Clio, and Terpsichore, with their classical attributes, followed by the seasons, who are grouped round Pegasus. Æschylus, the father of tragedy, Minerva, Bacchus, and Melpomene, are not forgotten; and Orestes, pursued by two furies, is seen claiming the protection of Apollo, who advances on his car drawn by four coursers. On the other

bas-relief, Shakspeare, the creator of romantic tragedy, is represented as having just modelled out the characters of the Tempest. The monster Caliban is seen bending beneath his burthen, Ferdinand is represented with his hand upon the hilt of his sword, Miranda is supplicating Prospero, and Ariel is touching his magic lute. Then comes a scene from Macbeth; and, further on, Milton is discovered, contemplating Urania, and surrounded by the allegorical characters of his masque of Comus.

Covent Garden Theatre, which is larger than Drury Lane, will hold upwards of three thousand persons. The interior is ornamented in a rich and tasteful style.

The whole success of Drury Lane rests on the individual exertions of Kean. He stands in opposition to three distinguished actors at the rival theatre, and to a company, upon the whole, superior to his own.

The celebrated John Kemble belonged to Covent Garden Theatre during the latter period of his public career, and his retirement was deeply regretted by every lover of the drama. In some characters, he is said to have been unrivalled; but the partisans of Kean affirm, that Kemble's perfection was the perfection of art, while Kean's is that of nature. In some parts, however, Kean is acknowledged to be inferior to Kemble. He wants the dignity and grandeur requisite for Hamlet and Coriolanus. "Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble," says Lord Byron, "were the *ideal* of

tragic action. We shall never see again either Coriolanus or Macbeth. Of Kemble, we may say, with reference to acting, what Cardinal de Retz said of the Marquis of Montrose, that he was the only man he ever saw who reminded him of the heroes of Plutarch."

The English stage is indebted to John Kemble for an improvement, which our's received from Talma—namely, the correct observance of ancient costume. Our Roscius has evidently studied the English style of declamation; but, as yet, he has only produced a partial revolution in the public taste. He is, at present, the only actor of his own school, and the propriety of imitating seems to be a very doubtful point. In the innovations of genius there is always a degree of boldness which excites surprise. In France we are so accustomed to admire only that which is strictly conformable to academic rules, that we feel distrustful of all novelty. Even in England, there appeared to be, at first, some degree of hesitation in approving of Kean, because he was not a copyist of Kemble. His example, however, has produced a great influence on the English actors of the present day. Macready soon discovered the secret of Kean's powerful bursts of feeling, and he already equals his rival in many characters, while his talents embrace a wider sphere. Macready promises fair, after a few years study, to be completely master of Kean's impassioned style, subdued and refined by the dignity of Kemble. Macready, though not strictly handsome, has a great advantage over

Kean, in the possession of a striking figure. Kean's voice is harsh and feeble, while Macready's possesses uncommon power, richness, and variety. In addition to these natural advantages, he unites acuteness of feeling, and pure critical taste, to an enthusiastic love of his profession. I regret extremely that his abrupt departure for Italy deprived me of the pleasure of meeting him at the house of M. Hulmandel, where my friend Charles Nodier procured me so hospitable a reception.

Young is another favourite actor at Covent Garden Theatre, and the French who visit London are frequently inclined to prefer him to all the rest. The truth is, that he possesses some portion of the merits of all his rivals, and he evinces taste and judgment in the employment of these qualifications. His voice is sonorous, and there is a degree of dignity as well as grace in his acting. His delivery is rather eloquent than impassioned, and he is more successful in the expression of pride, hatred, or disdain, than in the delineation of more tender or noble sentiments. He is eminently successful in pourtraying hypocrisy and dissimulation, but is far less natural when he attempts to express the generosity, nobleness, and enthusiasm of the heroes of history or romance. These parts are reserved for Charles Kemble, the brother of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, who is a most successful representative of those ideal characters. Charles Kemble indulges in no exaggeration, and the Keanists accuse him of being too tame. The combined talents of Macready

Young, and C. Kemble render Shakspeare's Julius Cæsar as perfect an illusion as if it were represented on a Roman stage, and Plutarch's chronicle is exhibited with the truth and force of reality. These three favourite actors often perform in comedy, in which they are, in many instances, no less successful than in tragedy.

Covent Garden is less fortunate in actresses. Indeed, the female portion of the company of this theatre more frequently injure than support the effect of a performance. The public seems to have tacitly renounced the right of requiring the exertion of talent from actresses, and singers only are esteemed. While the nobility crowd to the Opera to admire and applaud Italian music, the middle class of people, for the sake of following the fashion, become music-mad at the two national theatres. Mrs. Siddons was succeeded by Miss O'Neil, who, in consequence of her marriage with a man of fortune, retired, at the age of twenty-three, from the stage of Covent Garden, where, for a few seasons, she reigned queen of tragedy.

Never was any actress endowed with the power of smiles and tears like Miss O'Neil; no one ever excelled her in the delineation of love, or in the pathetic expression of feminine sorrow. Juliet, Imogen, Isabella, Calista, and Monimia, received additional graces from her representation, while the beautiful Mrs. West, the lovely Miss Foote, and the interesting Miss Tree, require all the aid of fine poetry to give effect to these parts.

In the character of Desdemona, Miss Foote

relies wholly on her natural charms, though the poet evidently intended that this model of gentleness and innocence should interest chiefly by her simplicity, modesty, and devotedness to her husband, whose love to her is every thing.

But Macready's Othello and Young's Iago are worthy of Shakspeare. Young has formed so accurate a conception of the infernal machiavelism and instinctive wickedness of Iago; he so admirably expresses his cold irony, his profound hypocrisy, and his base triumph in the success of his treachery, that I caught myself occasionally in the act of averting my head, as though I felt a superstitious dread of the influence of the *evil* eye.* A German artist has recently published some outline sketches for the illustration of Goëthe's *Faust*. The figure of Mephistophiles is, of course, repeatedly represented, and one would be inclined to believe that Young had modelled the countenance and attitudes of his Iago on those of the wily messenger of Satan. Happening to be at Colnaghi's this morning, I again examined the sketches to which I have just alluded, and I recognized Young in every one of them.

I wish I could give you an idea of Macready's admirable performance of Othello. I should find it a very difficult task to analyse, with any degree of precision, the different emotions which that tragedy excited in me. I really think I shall be obliged

* See the notes to the *Giaour*, on the subject of this Turkish superstition.

to abjure, at last, all the doctrines of my poetic faith. At all events, I begin to feel that the law of unities is but a secondary condition of the legitimate drama. It is only by the perusal of some indifferent tragedy, by a modern author, that I can be induced to re-adopt the prejudices of our literary education. It is the privilege of genius alone to dispense with rules.

The tragedy of Othello possesses no political interest. It is founded on the two passions, of love and revenge; it appeals directly to the heart, and to the most ordinary feelings of our nature. Othello, who is generous, tender, and confiding, yet ardent and impetuous, like all the children of the sun, is, by the power of jealousy, suddenly plunged into the delirium of fury and despair. I will mention the scenes which appear to me best calculated to display the genius of the actor. Othello's entrance, when he comes in to prevent a combat between his own friends and those of Brabantio, denotes the noble modesty of the warrior. His address to the senate, is at once dignified and simple. After the explanation of the quarrel between Cassio and Roderigo, in which every circumstance convinces the general that Cassio is to blame, with what dignity he dismisses him from his service: "Cassio, I love thee; but never more be officer of mine." The third act, is, perhaps, the master-piece of Shakspeare; it comprises all the effects of the dramatic art, and the dialogue in which Iago begins to put his artifices in practice, is managed with consummate skill.

Hints and insinuations are employed to shake the generous confidence of the Moor, until, at length, his jealousy breaks forth with the violence of a half smothered fire. When the poison reaches the heart of Othello, he utters only the brief exclamation—"Ha!"—and both Macready and Kean, express, by this simple monosyllable, the deadly stroke that assails the heart of the noble Moor. Kean utters it with a sort of shriek; and, though Macready pronounces it in a more subdued tone, he renders it equally expressive of surprise and conviction, hatred and revenge. Othello is for a moment, overpowered by these mingled feelings, and Iago proceeds, unheeded by him, to define the passion of jealousy, in order to lacerate the wound he has already inflicted. The Moor's second exclamation—"Oh, misery!"—is the result of torturing reflection. Iago then returns to the charge, and no sooner does he pronounce the fatal word, *jealousy*, than the generous soul of Othello is roused to indignation. He seeks to hide, even from himself, the suspicion which torments him; but the vulture of Prometheus is preying on his heart.

"I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits," says the treacherous Iago. "Not a jot, not a jot!" is the reply. Kean pronounces these words with a forced smile, which, though very effective, is, perhaps, rather too common-place. Macready gives the reply with the hesitation of a man, who feels, that he must first believe himself what he would persuade others to believe. Love still

reigns unsubdued within his heart; and when Desdemona enters, Othello gives himself up to the happiness of believing her innocent. But Iago does not abandon his prey; he pours fresh poison into the breast of the Moor, and works him up to feelings of revenge, which blood alone can satiate. You know the manner in which Talma used to deliver the following passage:—

——— Dans leur rage cruelle
Nos lions du désert, dans leurs antres brûlans,
Déchirent quelquefois les voyageurs tremblans—
Il vaudrait mieux pour lui que leur faim dévorante,
Dispersât les lambeaux de sa chair palpitante,
Que de tomber vivant dans mes terribles mains."*

The lines in Shakspeare, which correspond to these, are not so emphatic; but, delivered by Kean and Macready, they produce the same terror which the roar of the tiger must excite in the unhappy wanderer of the desert:—

"Oh that the slave had forty thousand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge!"

Othello's eyes flash fire, his teeth are clenched; his hands, by their motion, seem already plunged in the blood of his enemy. This scene leads to an anticipation of the catastrophe. A feeling of

* A look, an action, a single word, would be more expressive than all this Moorish declamation. However, it must be remembered, that in this passage Ducis has not translated Shakspeare.

returning tenderness for Desdemona, suspends, for a while, the vengeance of the Moor; and after her death, after he imagines that he has performed an act of justice, he becomes conscious of the full extent of his loss, and the torments of vain remorse are now as terrible to him as the workings of his furious rage. At this point, Kean and Macready produce a surprising effect, by one of those natural and sudden bursts of feeling, which I cannot bring myself to look upon as trivial. When Othello is made acquainted of Iago's villainy, he gives vent to his anger and despair, by the exclamation of "'fool! fool!" a phrase which has been generally esteemed vulgar, and to which the English actors used to endeavour to give a degree of importance by the vehemence of their action. Kean was the first to give it due effect, by a rapid, and almost inarticulate mode of utterance, accompanied by a sort of half smile, at his fatal incredulity.

The studied pomp of our tragic style, necessarily obliges, even our most natural actors, to adopt rigid rules of declamation. Talma has been censured for *speaking*, rather than *declaiming*, in tragedy. Shakspeare and Plutarch have drawn their heroes in morning-gowns and slippers.* On the English stage, kings are merely men; while, on ours, they are, sometimes, almost smothered by

* I do not remember whence I borrow this expression; I believe it is from Sherlock.

the weight of embroidered robes, and the stately perriwigs of Louis XIV.'s court.*

I have little to say on the subject of the melo-dramatic entertainment which followed Othello. The taste of the galleries is consulted at Covent Garden, as well as at Drury Lane. "Cherry and Fair Star," is borrowed from a fairy tale of Madame d'Aulnoy. The hero and heroine are two unfortunate, innocent, and persecuted lovers, who at length triumph over all sorts of enchantments, by dint of courage and virtue. As to its literary merits, the piece is on a level with "Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp." The decorations, and the changes of scenery, were as splendid, and as ably managed, as if they had been under the direction of the magician Ciceri. A galley enters full sail into the port of Cyprus. We are transported, first to the garden of fairies, next to the grove of illusion, to a forest of fire, which surrounds a basin of *dancing* water, to the summit of Mount Caucasus, and, lastly, the triumph of virtue is exhibited in a palace worthy of Versailles. It is impossible not to feel interested in the fate of *Fair Star;* the charming actress who represents that part, would be distinguished for her grace, even amidst the train of nymphs over whom Bigottini and Noblet preside.

* I speak figuratively; but, I believe, I give a fair idea of the state-robes, which tradition has transmitted to our actors, notwithstanding the happy revolution that has taken place in tragic costume.

This fairy spectacle has enabled me to form some notion of the nature of those splendid historical representations, such as the coronation of George IV., which frequently amuse the Londoners for a hundred successive nights. Napoleon's marriage, I believe, furnished the subject of one of these historico-dramatic entertainments.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO M. C. GOSSELIN.

THERE are better tragic actors in London than in Paris, where, for my part, I generally feel very much inclined to fall asleep during the performance of a tragedy. In Paris, tragedy is a literary entertainment, and in London a dramatic treat. This is as much owing to the difference of acting, as to the difference of style in tragic composition. Our comic performers, however, evince better taste than the English. Not but that the theatre of the Rue Richelieu may be severely criticised, even in comedy; and I doubt whether it could bring together, in every piece, four actors, equal in talent to those whom I saw the other night at Covent Garden, in the "School for Scandal."

Farren in Sir Peter Teazle, Young in Joseph Surface, Charles Kemble in Charles, Liston in Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Fawcett in Sir Oliver, are each almost perfect in their particular line. Mrs. Davison, in Lady Teazle, appeared to me superior to any actress I have yet seen in London; for the famous Mrs. Jordan, whom the English compared to Mademoiselle Mars, is no more, and Miss Kelly is not engaged either at Covent Garden or Drury Lane.

Farren, though still very young, is a finished comic actor. He has a fund of humour, and gives an appearance of truth to the most grotesque caricatures. Yet, in the higher walks of comedy, he never loses sight of nature, and always shews singular discernment in the conception of his parts. There is something extremely odd in the play of his countenance. His features sometimes remain during a whole scene as immoveable as those of a mask, and then, all of a sudden, are made to express the feeling which agitates him with extraordinary flexibility. He is admirable in Lovegold, which is Molière's Harpagon clothed in an English dress by Fielding; in Lord Ogleby, the model of the *Ci-devant jeune homme*; and he is the only actor who has successfully personated one of the finest creations of Sir Walter Scott's fancy, namely, Isaac of York. Farren represents, with admirable correctness, the crouching humility of the old Jew, and the habits which he has contracted, through age and continual distrust, until terror and misfortune drive him to despair. He is no

less successful in the expression of paternal affection, which is developed with a degree of energy proportionate to the strength of character which enabled him so long to dissemble his passions. When the old man learns that no ransom will purchase his daughter's freedom, the pride and boldness with which he rises from his attitude of supplication before Front-de-Bœuf, almost elevate him to the dignity of a hero.

In Sir Peter Teazle, Farren's humour and originality are extremely entertaining.

The part of Joseph Surface is admirably performed by Young. Macready also fills it with success. These two actors, when they assume the modern dress, have the air and the manners of perfect gentlemen. Young, indeed, displays at times a slight tinge of affectation, while Macready's deportment is perfectly unconstrained and graceful. He always maintains a suitable degree of dignity, without ever losing his natural ease. I saw him again last night in Count Almaviva, and I must needs confess that he has more of the nobleman, in look and manner, than M. D——s, who so often injures the effect of his acting by his frightful grimaces and the awkward movements of his shoulders.

Charles Kemble's performance in the School for Scandal, and, indeed, generally speaking, whenever he appears in comedy, is distinguished by an air of elegance; but his talent is more particularly adapted to parts which have somewhat of a romantic cast.

Liston fills but a subordinate character in the School for Scandal, but it was sufficient to satisfy me with respect to his talent, which I fancied had been rather overrated when I saw him for the first time in Figaro. This actor, whose countenance is quite as ludicrous as that of Potier, may rival him as well as Brunet, Perlet, Odry, and all the great men of our minor theatres, in buffoonery.

Liston is the spoiled child of the pit and galleries. Like Potier, he has the privilege of making people laugh by a look. Henry B—— informs me that when Liston entered upon his theatrical career, he persuaded himself that he possessed a talent for tragedy, but he excited such bursts of laughter in the performance of a pathetic part, that he made up his mind to represent, in future, none but humourous characters. He made but a poor figure lately, at his own benefit, in an attempt at genteel comedy.*

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* I here omit some quotations from Sheridan's play, because the "School for Scandal" having been imitated by Chéron, translated in the *Theatres étrangérs*, and lately transferred, with some mutilations, to the boards of one of our minor theatres, is better known in France than any other English comedy. I have also left out a comparison, which, I doubt not, has already been made between the scene in which Mrs. Candour, Lady Sneerwell, &c. launch into attacks on their friends, and one in the *Misanthrope*, in which Molière has almost lent grace to the malice of our fair and fashionable scandal-mongers. The latter scene could not be duly appreciated except in Paris; while on the contrary, Mrs. Candour's tittle-tattle would produce a greater effect in the country. Both scenes are true to nature; Molière's is most refined—Sheridan's is most highly coloured.

The theatrical season is now near a close, and benefits and dramatic transformations have commenced. The performers, at their benefits, usually make choice of a new character, and it rarely happens that they select one adapted to their powers. In Paris, on a similar occasion, I remember to have seen Mademoiselle Duchesnois make but an awkward figure in the part of a little country girl, while her rival of the Odéon rendered herself ridiculous in the Countess Almaviva. This performance, it is true, was worth thirty thousand francs to Mademoiselle Georges, and many demean themselves for less now-a-days.

This year Mr. Kean revived an old play of Massinger's, called *The Roman Actor*, of which only one act was played; and in the little piece of "The Waterman" he descended to the comic character of Tom Tug. He applied the produce of these representations for the relief of the poor Irish; and as the English pride themselves very much on their generosity in succouring the distressed, I was surprised at not finding the theatre full. Alas! there is a little quackery and ostentation in the boasted generosity of the English, as there is in almost all their pretensions to superior virtue. Open a subscription at a guinea a head, and advertize the names of the principal subscribers in the newspapers, and the list will soon be filled up; but the anonymous benefaction conferred by the purchase of a play-ticket, is not so satisfactory to British vanity. Kean's benefit usually puts five hundred guineas in his pocket;

but on this occasion he could procure only half that sum, for the victims of ministerial oppression in Ireland.

The last performance of the season is always attended with some sort of ceremony, and the manager generally delivers a farewell address to the public. The audience was, consequently, very much disappointed at Drury Lane, this year, when the curtain was seen to fall without Elliston having made his appearance. "The address!—the address!" was vociferated from every quarter, and the most violent uproar ensued. At length Cooper presented himself, and after bowing very respectfully, he addressed the audience in a short speech, commencing with "Ladies and Gentlemen;" for the English, on these occasions, are more polite than we, who invariably say, "Messieurs et Mesdames." After stating that Elliston was confined at home by severe indisposition, he returned thanks to the public, in the name of his brother performers, and withdrew.

A mixture of applause and disapprobation followed this address. Mr. Elliston has not performed during the whole season, so that I have had no opportunity of judging of his merits as an actor, which have been highly complimented by Lord Byron in one of his works.

The annual address was delivered in due form at the closing of Covent Garden Theatre. Mr. Fawcett, who, by the bye, is a very agreeable actor, reminded the audience that nothing had been neglected to give them satisfaction, and as-

sured them that the vacation would be employed in justifying the preference which his theatre had obtained over Drury Lane;—that is to say, some of the actors will go to the country theatres, and the rest will perform, during the remainder of the summer, at the Haymarket, the English Opera House, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

TO M. P. BLAIN.

Though I have not yet said a word about Dowton, Terry, Emery, Munden, Knight, or Miss Kelly, I think I have already mentioned a sufficient number of clever actors to shew, that the London theatres possess a powerful host of comic genius.

The distinguished authors of the present day have, therefore, no excuse for not writing for the stage. There is, indeed, no want of dramatic talent among contemporary writers. Many works of recent production seem to want only the dramatic form, to render them worthy of comparison with the master-pieces of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. Sir Walter Scott possesses, in a singular degree, all the necessary qualifications for a dramatic author. His profound knowledge of the

human heart, and of mankind in general, his shrewd observation of the most secret operations of the mind, his acquaintance with the peculiar habits and customs of different periods, the facility with which he pourtrays characters the most opposite, his power of inventing an inexhaustible variety of affecting and comic situations, and the truth, energy, and spirit of his dialogue, all prove that his talent is admirably adapted to dramatic literature. Yet Sir Walter Scott has been himself at the pains of undeceiving those who seemed to look forward to him as the future Molière of Great Britain.

No English dramatic author, since Sheridan and Cumberland, has produced any work of sterling merit.

Mrs. Inchbald, the pleasing authoress of "The Simple Story," has produced mere milk and water comedies; for though they have the merit of pleasingly inculcating morality and generous philanthropy, they are, upon the whole, destitute of originality and comic fancy. Mrs. Cowley is even inferior to her, in spite of the success of her "Belle's Stratagem." General Burgoyne is more famous for his military disasters than for the merits of his "Heiress," the idea of which was borrowed from Diderot. In addition to a tolerable share of spirit in the dialogue, it possesses more elegance than English pieces in general, and this is the only praise that can be conceded to it. Prince Hoare, Holcroft, Morris, Cobb, and O'Keefe, fill only a middle rank in the list of dra-

matic authors. O'Keefe, indeed, is merely a writer of farces. I fear Frederick Reynolds, too, must have a similar place assigned him, though his first piece, "The Dramatist," was intended as a satire on the bad taste of that class of writers. Mrs. Inchbald insinuates, that he has drawn his own character in that of the poet *Vapid*, who, in his attempts at comic situations, invariably falls into the burlesque. Lewis's acting gave a degree of originality to this insipid character; but the piece died with him, and the same fate attended the productions of Thomas Morton. I must put in a saving clause, however, for the two first acts of the comedy of "Speed the Plough," which unfortunately degenerates into melo-drama in the three last. In this play, at least, Morton's humour is original, and never fails to entertain the audience. He has drawn a pleasing picture of national manners, together with several highly comic characters. Ashfield and his wife introduce us into the family of an English farmer. Sir Abel Handy and his son are excellent personifications of that mania for improvements, which, like all other good things, may be turned to abuse. The ingenious Dean of St. Patrick would readily have given these originals a place in his Academy of Laputa. In the rest of his dramas, however, Morton, like Reynolds and Holcroft, substitutes burlesque jargon for the language of comedy; and all the wit of the principal character consists in the eternal repetition of some cant phrase which may possibly excite laughter the first time it is

uttered. Emery succeeded Lewis in the task of supporting Morton and Reynolds's comedies; but this admirable performer gives a totally new colouring to the characters he represents, and impresses on them the stamp of his own originality.

I should wish to speak of George Colman with less severity, out of respect to the name he bears. "The Jealous Wife" and "The Clandestine Marriage" are comedies of first-rate merit. The elder Colman did not owe his success to low buffoonery. He did not aim at a display of showy antitheses, or at exciting surprise by the extravagance of his characters and incidents. Even his most trivial productions are interesting and amusing, from their ease, truth to nature, and agreeable vein of satire. But the son has rarely followed the example of the father. He fell into the mistake of fancying himself a man of genius, and by attempting to embrace every different style of dramatic composition, he has at length confounded them altogether. His plays are a jumble of tragedy, comedy, drama, farce, and opera. Even in his most serious productions he avails himself of Figaro's hint: *Ce qui ne vaut pas etre dit, on le chante*; or, as the English couplet expresses it,

> "If you can't get along
> You may throw in a song."

Colman has never produced one genuine drama, either pathetic or comic. Sometimes, indeed, a moving scene, a fragment of humorous dialogue, or a noble sentiment expressed with energy and

elegance, leads us to regret that his talent has not taken a happier direction. He has evidently studied the authors of Elizabeth's age, but any beauties he may have borrowed from them, are destroyed, by being blended with imitations of the German drama. Even the pieces which Colman has borrowed from the original novels of Cervantes, Sterne, and Godwin, bear traces of mystical sentimentality, absurdly mingled with vulgar buffoonery. In the *Mountaineers*, which is taken from one of the episodes in Don Quixote, he has merely painted a picture of raving madness, contrasted with the common-place jokes, which an Irishman very lavishly deals out amidst the passes of the Sierra Morena. Colman's play of the *Iron Chest*, the subject of which is taken from *Caleb Williams*, does not rise above the mediocrity of melo-dramatic composition.

I observe from the newspapers, that the police of Paris, which is generally short-sighted in its petty persecutions, has recently given a degree of importance to Colman's play of *John Bull*. This piece was a favourite of the late king, which proves that George III. had not a very correct taste in dramatic literature. *John Bull* is, however, interesting and amusing in those scenes in which the author has spared the jargon of Reynolds and Morton; but, it is not equal to the *Habitant de la Guadeloupe*, which is a drama of the same class. Colman degrades a man of rank, and puts the language of noble independence into the mouth of a copper-smith, who is intended as a personification

of the English people, oppressed by a tyrannical aristocracy. This is the whole secret of the success of *John Bull.* The scene in which the injured father takes possession of the chair of the prevaricating judge, is truly fine; I hope it was not that which alarmed the chief of our St. Hermandad. It is curious to remark the effect produced on English manners, by the democratic ideas of 1789. In a similar situation, the father of Richardson's *Pamela* contents himself with uttering a few timid complaints against 'Squire B——. In *John Bull,* the just indignation of the poor man, oppressed by the man of fortune, takes place of the pathetic tears of worthy Farmer Andrews. Richardson and Colman have both faithfully pourtrayed the manners and feelings of their respective ages.*

* The comparison of these two pictures of English manners, plainly shews the influence of liberal ideas on the people, and even on ministerial writers, such as Colman junior. What a curious spectacle it must have been to see a king applaud so severe a lesson to his aristocracy! It was like royalty encouraging revolution. But incidents of this kind, do not, surely, authorize the English in addressing to us every possible expression of contempt, and proclaiming the French to be hereditary courtiers, always ready to bend to power, however unjust, or enjoying liberty only in the saturnaliæ of slaves! I could mention several striking proofs of servile adulation, which his present majesty, George IV., has received from *liberal* John Bull; but I prefer going back to a more remote period in English history, to quote an instance of ultra-royalist devotedness, which shews what sort of monarchial doctrine prevailed half a century before Richardson's time.

Lord Clarendon was undoubtedly one of the most virtuous of Charles II.'s ministers. He was the Thucydides of the civil wars of his time, and was as sincere, in his own opinions, as he was liberal to the adverse party.

The *Surrender of Calais*, has been, by some critics, pronounced to be Colman's master-piece.

He himself relates, that on discovering that his eldest and favourite daughter had become pregnant by the king's brother, and presumptive heir to the throne, he flew into a violent passion, and declared that when he went home he would turn her out of doors, and never see her again; feelings and expressions which were perfectly natural, in a man whose rigid virtue had constantly withheld him from visiting the king's mistresses, though he was the only one of the ministers who evinced such a regard for decorum. But no sooner was Clarendon informed that the Duke of York and his daughter were privately married, and that there was an intention of declaring the marriage, than the Tory prevailed over the father and the man. This circumstance, though it was calculated to console him, aggravated the offence ten-fold, in his estimation, and served only to exasperate his indignation.

He again gave full vent to his anger, and said, that if it were true that his daughter was actually married to the duke, he was prepared to advise the course which ought to be adopted. He protested, that he would rather his daughter should be the duke's mistress than his wife. In the former case, he observed, nobody could blame him for turning his child out of doors, as he was not obliged to harbour a mistress for the greatest prince on earth; and the indignity to himself, he would submit to, as to the pleasure of God. But, he added, that if there were any reason to suspect they were lawfully married, he was ready to give a positive judgment (in which he hoped the Lords Ormond and Southampton would concur with him) that the king should immediately cause the young lady to be sent to the Tower, cast into a dungeon, and strictly guarded from all communication with her friends; and then, that an act of parliament should be immediately passed, for beheading her; to which, he would not only give his consent, but very willingly be the first to propose it.—"And whoever knew the man, (says Lord Clarendon, speaking of himself) will believe that he said all this very heartily."

Clarendon firmly persisted in his determination, and solemnly affirmed, in the presence of the king and council, that he would bear the infamy and death of his daughter, rather than see royalty degraded by such a marriage. When he afterwards ascertained, that the marriage had been validly solemnized, he still urged the expediency of putting his daughter to death by a bill of attainder.

Could the Grand Turk himself expect more from one of his devoted

It is copied from a French novel of the same title, rather than from the national tragedy of Dubelloy. The author deserves credit for having felt how much the heroic devotedness of Eustache de Saint-Pierre was superior to that of Edward. But Colman has not neglected to make his countrymen laugh, at the expence of the poor besieged citizens of Calais. The picture of a population, whose courage is subdued only by the extremity of want, might have been rendered susceptible of powerful tragic effects in the irregular system of the English drama. A man of genius would have employed the pencil of Dante, to give an impressive colouring to his subject. Colman has enlarged the tower of Ugolino, it is true, but he has filled it with characters, whose grimaces and trivial discourse are worthy of Punchinello. I know not whether Colman's absurd caricatures of the French be dictated by national spirit, but certainly they present none of the spirit of genuine comedy.

Mr. G. Colman fills the office of dramatic censor of London, under the auspices of the Lord Chamberlain. The exquisite fastidiousness evinced, in some of his decisions, bears a striking resemblance to the proceedings of our Parisian censorship.

subjects? The above circumstance was lately quoted in an article in the Edinburgh Review, by Brougham, who observes, that there has been, and still is, as much servility in England, as in France. For my part, I must confess, that the conduct of Lord Clarendon exceeds all my notions of toryism.

The rejection of a tragedy, entitled "Alasco," by Mr. Shee, recently excited a general feeling of dissatisfaction, I shall probably have occasion hereafter to notice this tragedy.

Dramatic composition is decidedly the feeble portion of contemporary English literature. Comedy, indeed, seems to be nearly extinct. The writer of a recent article, in the Edinburgh Review, on Chenier's *Tableau de la Litterature Française Moderne*, cautiously refrains from dwelling on the names of George Colman, Holcroft, &c.

Willing as I am to render full justice to the merits of such writers as Cumberland, Murphy, and Sheridan, I cannot but feel proud in opposing to them the French authors, who have enriched our comic drama since the year 1789. In spite of the mystico-burlesque strictures of German criticism, the French alone understand the secret of genuine comedy. I am aware that our tragic system stands in need of a revolution, like that of every other nation in Europe; but our comedy may continue to be regarded as a model, without any modification of its forms. Several pieces, such as M. Picard's *Conteur*, prove that French dramatists can sacrifice unity to the more necessary law of interest. We have been repeatedly threatened with the dangerous encroachments of bad taste; but the footsteps of Molière and Regnard have been followed by Andrieux, Fabre d'Eglantine, Colin d'Harleville, Picard, Duval, Eteinne, &c. We have also several young authors, who

bid fair to pursue the same track with success, but I shall not name them, because they have before them a long career of glory, in which their rank is as yet uncertain.

In alluding to the comedies of contemporary writers, I must not omit mentioning a piece which affords a triumphant answer to the reproach addressed by English critics to French dramatists, namely, that they want boldness and originality. The *Pinto* of M. Lemercier may be numbered among the remarkable productions of the age. It is as good as one of Scott's novels.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO M. RENÉ PERIN.

Before I proceed to notice a few tragedies, which seem to encourage the hope that dramatic art may again be revived in England, I must give you some account of the secondary theatres, or, as they are called, the summer theatres of London. When Covent Garden and Drury Lane close for the season, two new theatrical companies are formed, one for the Haymarket, and the other for the English Opera House. The Haymarket company perform melo-drama, farce, and comedy, when they can. This season, however, they possess a rare combination of talent: they have

Charles Kemble, Liston, Terry, who, in some of his characters, rivals Farren; Oxberry, a very original actor, Mrs. Chatterley, an excellent representative of pert Abigails, and several other performers of distinguished merit. Madame Vestris, a very pleasing singer, whom I have already heard at Drury Lane, is also engaged at the Haymarket Theatre, to which she is an important acquisition. She does not, indeed, console the British dilettanti for the absence of Miss Stephens, the nightingale of Covent Garden, who imparts Italian grace to the cacophony of English song. Miss Stephens's voice was formed for the language of Metastasio, and the music of Mozart and Rossini. Her rival is a Mrs. Salmon, who sings only at concerts. I can conscientiously bestow the highest praise on these two sirens, though I have heard Mainville-Fodor and Pasta.

Madame Vestris was not a particular favourite with the public until she appeared in male attire. She has an extraordinary predilection for personating libertines. At Drury Lane, she has performed Don Juan with great applause, and at the Haymarket she selected, for her first appearance, the part of Captain Macheath, in the *Beggars' Opera*. Few pieces have been more popular than this singular production of John Gay, one of the most distinguished wits of Queen Anne's reign. If we may give credit to Swift, who, however, admired anything in the shape of satire and sarcasm, the Beggars' Opera is even more moral than witty. But this Newgate pastoral, with its highwayman hero, has, by more fastidious critics,

been pronounced to be a lesson of roguery, and an encouragement to vice; and its pernicious tendency has even been denounced from the pulpit. Gay doubtless intended, in the first instance, merely to parody the Italian Opera, which was then beginning to be much admired in London. But the poet had spent half his life in hunting after a place; disappointment had soured his temper, and he gave full vent to his spleen by satirizing human nature in his Beggars' Opera. His sarcasms are put into the mouths of felons and prostitutes; but their cynism is tempered by perfect truth to nature in the dialogue, and elegant versification in the songs. The character of Captain Macheath has a touch of the romantic; but he is, nevertheless, too unpoetic a hero to be represented by a female, who must necessarily be disgusting if she be strictly natural, and must entirely pervert the part if she attempt to refine it. Madame Vestris has chosen the latter course, and she makes Macheath merely an insipid gallant; but she sings charmingly, and the public applaud her.

Colman has brought out, at the Haymarket Theatre, his last melo-drama, the *Law of Java*. The hero, Paraiba, is a lover, condemned by a jealous tyrant to go and collect the poison of the Upas tree. This is equivalent to a sentence of death; but an old man fortunately gives Paraiba such excellent directions for the execution of his mission, that he is enabled to return uninjured. His mistress is about to be pierced to death by

arrows, but she is preserved from this tragical fate by a law which the king of Java is obliged to observe as implicitly as if he were a constitutional sovereign. I must needs confess that I was much less amused with this spectacle, than with Goldsmith's lively comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer*. I saw it finely acted. Terry was Old Hardcastle, and Charles Kemble admirably represented the bashful Young Marlow. The somewhat rustic air of Mrs. Chatterley gave additional grace to her personation of Miss Hardcastle, and Liston, though perhaps too old for complete illusion in the part of Tony, yet, by the exquisite drollery of his performance, maintained among the gods that continued laughter, which, as Homer informs us, even the graver deities of Olympus were often unable to repress.

The managers of the Haymarket theatre can boast of very little originality in the pieces which they bring forward for the amusement of the public; and honest John Bull, when he bestows his approbation on entertainments which are announced as new, never suspects that he is encouraging contraband literature. The pleasing sketches of manners, for which we are indebted to M. Scribe and company, the pictures of vulgar life which are dashed off in an hour by the successors of Vadé, together with the more elegant and not less comic scenes of our Vaudevilles, supply a fertile source of materials to the dramatic authors of the Haymarket, and often to those of Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

But the name of the original French author never appears, either in the play-bill, or on the title-page of the piece, when published. Plagiarisms are committed with no greater ceremony on the productions of those writers who have furnished our principal theatres with some of their most attractive entertainments. M. Andrieux' charming comedy of the *Etourdis* has proved a valuable prize to one of the English playwrights. A Mr. Kenneth has converted *Un Jour à Versailles* into *A Day at Richmond*, and a Mr. Jones has produced a clumsy imitation of the *Voyage à Dieppe*.

At the English Opera House, I recognized a vast number of these importations disguised by new names; but if I visited this last-mentioned theatre more frequently than the Haymarket, my countrymen must not suppose that it was from national predilections. Miss Clara Fisher, Miss Kelly, and Emery, were the attractions of the English Opera.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO M. G. JAL.

WHAT the English term an opera is nothing but a melo-drama, interspersed with songs. All Sir

Walter Scott's novels have been transformed into operas of this kind. The task of arranging these pieces is not very difficult. The principal scenes of the novel are linked together, without any regard to connection, and music borrowed from every nation and composer is adapted to songs which are often utterly inconsistent with the situation and sentiments of the characters to whom they are allotted. The voice of a favourite singer, the performance of one or two clever actors, splendid scenery and decorations, and occasionally the introduction of real horses, wholly supersede the necessity of talent in the compiler. The stage of the English Opera House is not sufficiently spacious to give effect to these melo-dramas, and consequently it is chiefly confined to the representation of Vaudevilles, which, though in the original they form but one act, are here swelled out to two or three, and dignified with the title of comic operas. In general, the music of these operas and melo-dramas no more belongs to the composers than the words do to the writers. But it must not therefore be inferred, that the English think themselves inferior to the French in musical composition. The degree of doctor of music is granted by one of the English universities. Handel is claimed as one of England's sons; and the last century produced Arne, Jackson, and Purcell, whose pleasing and simple melodies often resemble those of the *Devin du Village*, and who have acquired the honourable appellation of *men of genius*. Dibdin's operas, too, which have a certain national

character, have been performed with success. Shield and Sir John Stevenson are men of talent; but Bishop is the favourite English composer of the present day. Some of his productions are not deficient in grace and elegance, but they exhibit no traces of originality or genius.

But the English Opera is not visited this season exclusively by the lovers of music and singing. The magnet of attraction is the performance of a little phenomenon about twelve years of age. London has its Leontine Fay in the person of Clara Fisher. I must confess that, in general, I am no great admirer of infantine prodigies, whatever degree of astonishment they may excite; I can never repress a feeling of pain when I seen children compelled to renounce the liberty natural to their age, for the sake of representing characters equally above their comprehension and their stature; I always look upon them as the martyrs of their precocity.

The celebrated Master Betty familiarized the English public with these juvenile efforts. He received enormous sums of money from the managers of the two winter theatres, where he performed Richard III. Hamlet, Macbeth, Orestes, and all the heroes of tragedy, and was for a time distinguished by the flattering appellation of the *Young Roscius*. Though it is affirmed that Clara Fisher, *at three years of age equalled Kean in Richard III.*, yet fortunately her imitative talent has been more judiciously directed. This miniature actress recites, sings, and dances, in

the most fascinating style imaginable. But her intelligent and expressive countenance, and her natural gaiety of manner, are her principal charms. When she has to enact parts which are unsuited to her stature, she seems to anticipate the moment when her natural expression will fail her, and she defeats the difficulty by some ingenious stroke of humour. But in parts to which her person is adapted, she displays all that childish grace and ease which art can but imperfectly imitate. She is an admirable representative of a mischievous little boy. In characters like this she is no longer an actress, but a most engaging child: she does not surprise, but she interests and amuses.

I cannot bestow a higher tribute of praise on Emery, than by comparing him to Michot. Both are alike remarkable for vigour and sensibility. Emery and Michot, are the only actors I know of, who possess the art of naturally pourtraying rudeness of manners, combined with delicacy of feeling, and the union of passion and simplicity, which are the distinguishing characteristics of men who are called singular, because, amidst the refinements of civilization, they have preserved the primitive energy of nature. Emery particularly reminded me of Michot in *Madame de Sevigné*, for he excels in the representation of rustic characters, to which he gives a various, but always perfectly natural colouring. There is a certain *seriousness* in his manner of representing Farmer Ashfield, who often excites a smile by his familiarity and awkwardness, but who, nevertheless, pre-

serves all the dignity of a man, and commands respect by his noble sentiments and conduct. In parts, such as Tyke, in the *School of Reform*, and Giles, in the *Miller's Maid*, where passion is excited to enthusiasm, or even phrenzy, Emery is *tragical*, without losing sight of the vulgarity which belongs to his character, and he produces the liveliest emotions of terror and pity. Finally, he is exclusively *comic*, when the originality of his part consists in external manner, rather than in any peculiarity of sentiment or character. But even in this line of parts, Emery never degenerates into caricature; he still remains true to nature, when he excites the loudest bursts of laughter.

Emery speaks in perfection one of those provincial dialects, which produce as ludicrous an effect on the English stage as the Auvergnat or Gascon accent do on ours. He excels in giving a comical turn to the Yorkshire accent; but, before his time, the Somersetshire dialect was usually employed on the stage for the amusement of the London cockneys, who, like their Parisian brethren, are very much given to ridicule every jargon except their own.*

* Emery died since this letter was written.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO M. CH. NODIER.

Your interesting account of Miss Kelly, rendered me so curious to see her, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of describing to you the impression which her acting produced on me. I have not your letter before me, and I may, perhaps, differ from you on some points. But you have accustomed me to speak my mind candidly, because I know you attach more value to friendship than to complaisance;—and we shall still be friends, in spite of little differences of opinion.

For some time I was induced to believe, that Miss Kelly was a mere creation of your fancy. I sought and enquired for her every where, without success: she was neither at Drury Lane nor Covent Garden. At length, some one who apparently recollected her by an effort of memory, informed me that she was a melo-dramatic actress, who had enjoyed a temporary degree of celebrity in the *Maid and the Magpie*, a translation of our *Pie Voleuse*. This, I was certain, could not be the Miss Kelly I was in quest of. I almost de-

spaired of ever finding her, when one day I was looking over the works of Charles Lamb, a writer whose pleasing fancy and unaffected feeling I am sure you would admire. His essays on Shakspeare and Hogarth reflect the highest honour on his taste. He has also written some sonnets, which, like those of Mr. Bowles, are, in general, poetic developements of a moral sentiment or a touching idea. Among the number, there is one addressed to Miss Kelly, in which the poet pays an elegant tribute to her professional talents and private virtues. The identity was evident. But, thought I, can it be possible that Miss Kelly is appreciated by poets only? Would London, then, be insensible to the talent of Mademoiselle Mars, if we can imagine the possibility of Mademoiselle Mars being anything but a Frenchwoman? I was engaged in these reflections, which, as you will perceive, were calculated only to augment my curiosity, when I saw Miss Kelly's name in a playbill, announcing the benefit of an old performer of the same name, at the Opera House. Of course, I did not suffer this opportunity to escape, and I was not one of the last to work my way through the crowd, who were attracted by the desire of witnessing a performance in the Italian Opera House, for the ordinary prices of admission to the other theatres.

Miss Kelly had a difficult task to sustain. She performed the part of Clara in M. Duval's lively opera, which has here been transformed into a

comic afterpiece, entitled *Matrimony*.* The mixture of coquetry and simplicity in the character of Clara, the light sarcastic tone of the dialogue, the capricious transition from ill humour to tenderness,—all this, I conceive, can be gracefully managed only by a Frenchwoman; and, perhaps, of all our actresses, Mademoiselle Mars is the one who can sustain such a part most effectively. Miss Kelly certainly forms an accurate conception of the character; but she wants the elegance, the indescribable something, which belongs only to a Parisian female. I never before felt so perfectly sensible of the powerful effect produced by the magical voice of Mademoiselle Mars.

Since the opening of the summer theatres, Miss Kelly has been performing at the English Opera, so that I have had many opportunities of admiring the perfection and variety of her talent. Perhaps, now that I am more familiar with the manners of Englishwomen, I shqld be inclined to think more highly of Miss Kelly's performance of Clara, were I to see it again. The charm of Miss Kelly's acting consists in her unaffected manner, and her acute sensibility. With the liveliest imagination, she combines a high degree of exquisite tact, by the inspiration of which she is constantly guided.—Her acting is never artificial, and is perfectly free from all traces of study.

The simplicity of nature is Miss Kelly's ideal

* It is the *Adolph and Clara* of the German stage, with a few trifling alterations.

perfection. She herself feels every sentiment and passion which she represents, and her countenance possesses extraordinary flexibility of expression. She, therefore, imparts a charm and a poetical colouring even to the most trivial characters; and she elevates melo-drama to the dignity of tragedy.

Her delivery and action are so perfectly correct and natural, that her voice might supply the place of her gestures, and her gestures would be as eloquent as her words. This is exemplified by her acting in the piece entitled *Silent Not Dumb*,* in which she represents the poor servant girl, who is forced to be the mute instrument of the assassins of the inn, or to share the fate of the traveller, if she betray them. But one of Miss Kelly's most effective performances is the character of Edmund, in the afterpiece of the *Blind Boy*. I understand that a comedy, entitled *Valerie*, is in preparation in Paris, in which Mademoiselle Mars will, like Miss Kelly, consent to deprive herself of her most powerful charms, and to close those bright dark eyes, of which a single glance suffices to electrify her audience.† On my return to Paris,

* This is another drama of French origin. It was, I think, performed at the Theatre Feydeau, under the title of *La Maison dans la forêt, ou Deux Mots.*

† While I was revising this sheet for the press, I received a note from London, which is to form part of an article for a Magazine. I attribute it to Mr. Hazlitt, or some of his school.

(Here the author quotes an article on Madame Pasta and Mademoiselle Mars, which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine for January last.)

I am fully convinced that no one can bear criticism better than Mademoiselle Mars. I do not believe that Madame Pasta can act like her;

I shall be curious to compare their respective performances. Edmund, as soon as he appears, excites a tender interest. Miss Kelly imparts fascinating grace to all his alternatives of indecision and confidence, while at the same time she faithfully represents the habits which usually characterize the blind. Edmund's whole soul is pictured in his gestures. He loves and is beloved. He is present while some strangers are conversing with the good farmer who has protected him from his infancy. One of them congratulates the old man on his daughter's beauty; Edmund hears this, and immediately approaching Elvina, he seizes her hand, exclaiming, "Come, Elvina, come!" The tone in which Miss Kelly pronounces these words, accurately denotes the feeling of jealousy with which the blind youth is suddenly seized. But to explain the emotions which this charming actress inspires, it must be observed, that she herself feels them acutely, and that she is, like the spectator, under the illusion of her part. Thus the first time she performed in the *Miller's Maid*, the admirable acting of Emery produced such a powerful effect upon her, that she fell on the stage in a fit of hysterics.

Some of the most powerful emotions I ever experienced in my life, were excited by the pa-

but if, like Madame Pasta and Miss Kelly, Mademoiselle Mars were to perform tragic parts, she would play them as naturally as they do, and would produce emotions no less deep and varied. I know not whether Madame Pasta would succeed so well as Mademoiselle Mars in expressing the union of archness and simplicity, or in giving effect to the finesse of *marivandage*.

thetic acting of Miss Kelly in the *Miller's Maid* and the *Blind Boy*. In the latter piece I witnessed her performance three times with unabated interest.

I am astonished that the inhabitants of London should be so indifferent to the merits of Miss Kelly. Can it be because she is not engaged by the managers of either of the two great theatres? I am likewise, my dear Charles, at as much loss as you to understand the madness of the young man who one night fired a pistol at Miss Kelly, from the pit of the theatre, because she had rejected his offer of marriage.* Adieu! You and I will talk of Miss Kelly when we meet.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO M. AUG. SOULIÉ.

I VISITED the minor theatres of London too seldom to be enabled to give a minute account of them. The Surrey and Coburg Theatres are as large as our Porte-Saint-Martin, and the muse of

* This circumstance took place on the 17th of February, 1816, during the performance of the farce of *Modern Antiques*. The other day, when I was visiting New Bedlam, I saw the young man who fired at Miss Kelly. His name is Burnet, and he escaped the punishment due to his offence by being proved insane.

melo-drama is worshipped here with as much pomp as in Paris. At the Surrey Theatre I witnessed a ludicrous violation of the laws of costume: in a piece borrowed from one of the dramas of the Gaité or the Ambigu, of which Bayard was the hero: the knight was attired in the uniform of an officer of hussars. The Surrey Theatre has this season engaged young Grimaldi, who, as the representative of the pantomimic *clown*, is worthy to succeed his celebrated father. An English gentleman of my acquaintance observed to me, that Grimaldi possessed a *genius* for grimace; but my friend, like the rest of his countrymen, occasionally abuses the word genius.

Sadler's Wells Theatre, owing to the peculiarity of its construction and situation, admits of the exhibition of spectacles similar to the naumachiæ of the Romans. The space beneath the stage is filled with water, and forms, when required, a vast basin, suited to the representation of naval battles, &c.

The minor theatres of London are chiefly frequented by the inhabitants of the districts in which they are situated; and they are, like all other places of public amusement, closed on Sunday. But the working classes of London are not more disposed than those of Paris, to devote the Sabbath to the observance of religious duties. The public houses in the suburbs of the capital, are, in *moral* England, found to be no less profitable than the establishments of the same kind in *atheistical* France. When English writers acknow-

ledge that the common people of France conduct themselves decorously in their recreations, they take care to add, that our gaiety is a gaiety *by command*, and is subject to police regulations, as our plays are to dramatic laws. I must confess that John Bull appears in most disadvantageous colours in the saturnalia of a fair. Owing to the outrages which were committed this year at Brook Green fair, the magistrates propose suppressing it for the future; but to effect this object, it will, probably, be requisite to employ armed force, for John Bull is very jealous of his privilege of being disorderly on these occasions, when he seems determined to indemnify himself for his habitual taciturnity. I did not neglect to visit Brook Green fair; but it would require the language of Tabarin to describe this scene of tumult and confusion, in which every mechanic, against whom one is jostled in the crowd, seems to have a volley of insolence at his tongue's end. I shall not attempt to give you any idea of the riotous public houses, the noisy mountebanks, the painted signs, representing living phenomena, and the booths for the display of jugglers, rope-dancers, &c. whose dirty tinsel dresses scarcely cover the ragged garments beneath them. My attention was for a few moments arrested by a group of young rustics, attired in dresses at once remarkable for elegance and simplicity, and decorated with numerous bows of ribbon. They had small gingling bells fastened to their knees and ancles. Some waved white handkerchiefs, and others wands

They advanced in a regular step, forming a kind of graceful dance, and keeping time by striking their wands one against another. They reminded me of the morris-dancers alluded to by Shakspeare, and whom the Caledonian bard, in the Lady of the Lake, invites to the festivals of Stirling. They were, however, soon put to flight by a party of intoxicated and riotous fellows, who amused themselves by annoying the most peaceable part of the company who had been attracted to the fair. One of their favourite tricks seemed to be to pretend to tear people's clothes, by scratching them unawares with small rattles.

But this must not be regarded as a picture of the true sons of Old England, and their cheerful rustic pastimes. In the vicinity of great towns, all the poetic simplicity which formerly distinguished the manners of the lower classes has now completely disappeared. The thirst of gain has destroyed the various gradations of society, and divided the nation into two great classes—the rich and the poor. All amiable intercourse between them seems to be at an end. The plodding spirit which every where prevails, excludes that sociability of feeling, without which no true pleasure can exist.

When the higher classes of society in England evince their solicitude for the suppression of fairs, and other popular amusements, it is not through the dread of those outrages, which every friend to good order must naturally apprehend from the violence of a multitude more intent on riot than diversion. The Pharisees of the British aristo-

tracy pretend to be actuated by respect for public morals. But these, unfortunately, are the very men, who, as I have before observed, squander their money on Opera dancers, and fill the columns of the newspapers with the scandalous reports of *crim. con.* trials.

From the first of May to the first of September, the inhabitants of London may enjoy a *decorous* spectacle at Vauxhall Gardens. Vauxhall very much resembles our Tivoli. It is less gay, certainly, but more magnificent. The illuminations, in particular, display truly oriental splendour. On entering the Gardens, the first object that attracts attention is a superb orchestra, which contains an organ, and on which the seats of the musicians and singers are ranged in a semi-circular form. In case of rain, the company withdraw to a spacious pavilion, which is decorated in a fantastic, but very splendid, style. The entertainments consist of a concert, various feats of jugglers and rope-dancers, and exhibitions of hydraulic mechanism:—in short, at Vauxhall Gardens, no pains seem to be spared to captivate all the senses at once.

I visited Vauxhall at the latter end of June, and I saw a repetition of the fête in honour of the Duke of Wellington, which had been given on the 18th, the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. The Duke seems, at present, to be extremely popular among his countrymen; but when I saw the conqueror of conquerors exhibited, at full length, over the doors of public

houses, I was forcibly reminded of what Lord Byron says of the perishable glory of heroes.

"Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
And still should be so, but that the tide is turn'd;
There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
'Tis with our hero, quietly inurn'd;
Because the army's grown more popular,
At which the naval people are concern'd;
Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, How, and Jervis."

LETTER XL.

TO M. A. THIERS.

THERE are two theatres in London, which I hardly know how to describe to you, though the entertainments at each result wholly from the efforts of a single performer aided merely by a few whimsical disguises. The first is a little theatre, at which a Frenchman, named Alexandre, exercises his talent as a ventriloquist, with considerable ingenuity, and adds to it the illusion of his own personal metamorphoses. The English are much amused by his grimaces and *lazzi*; but I will give you a proof of my impartiality, by declaring my decided preference for Matthews, who, like Alexandre, entertains his

audience by his own unassisted talent. Alexandre's performance is all caricature; but Matthews adds to some ably drawn fancy pictures, some admirable historical portraits, and renders us familiarly acquainted with the celebrated characters he represents. To keep an audience, as Matthews does, in continual laughter, for a whole evening, must necessarily require a vast fund of ingenuity and humour. This Proteus has even power to rouse the curiosity and admiration of the fashionable world; and many a fine lady may thank him for relieving her, during a few hours, from the miseries of *ennui* and the blue devils.* Matthews is, therefore, declared to be a *genius*. Whether this decision be correct or not, I cannot pretend to say; but he is, certainly, not a mere vulgar parodist. His entertainment, this year, consists of a history of his youthful days, and he relates his adventures in a most amusing and familiar style, commencing, like Tristram Shandy, with an account of his birth. This amusing narrative is given by Matthews in his own character, and he merely changes his voice in the dialogues, to suit the different interlocutors. When, however, he has to pourtray any comic, personal peculiarity in his imaginary characters, or to introduce any individual well known to the public, he stoops down behind a table which stands on the stage, and, in a moment, re-appears, presenting a perfect sem-

* The English give the phantasmagoric name of *blue devils* to the disorder which the French ladies term *vapeurs*.

blance to the object he wishes to personate. Among his portraits of distinguished characters, this admirable comedian gives one of the celebrated Wilks, whose manner and appearance must have been truly original. He also delivers a speech in imitation of Curran, the barrister; the latter, having heard of Matthews's extraordinary talent for mimicry, sent him an invitation to dinner, to afford him an opportunity of studying his manner. After the history of his adventures, Matthews performs a little farce, in which he himself personates some of the characters whom his animated narrative has already introduced to his audience.

I have been informed, that this performer produces a still more striking effect, when he consents to exercise his singular talent in private. Like the dervis in the Arabian Nights, he animates another body besides his own. He feels, speaks, and acts precisely in the manner of the individual he imitates. In short, Matthews possesses the happiest physical organization, combined with exquisite shrewdness of perception.

The mere buffoon owes his success to the malicious pleasure which finds its gratification in the caricature of personal peculiarities. Matthews gives to his imitations, real dignity and dramatic interest. His object is, not merely to pourtray external singularities, he also represents traits of character and feeling. In his portraits, he, perhaps, occasionally exaggerates a few striking points; but he is like the painter who is bound to

consult the rules of perspective. Matthews rarely indulges in personality; his imitations frequently border on satire, but never degenerate into parody. Liston, on the contrary, is often merely grotesque.

A comedian and dramatist of the last century, the celebrated Foote, whose talent resembled that of Matthews, had not the same regard for propriety. Individuals of every rank and profession were mercilessly satirized by him, and held up to public ridicule in his farces and comedies, of which he himself sustained the principal characters. He declared, that he was only waging war against affectation, and correcting fools, by forcing them to see their own likenesses in his caricatures; but, in some instances, he had reason to repent of having too faithfully seized the resemblance.

The grand object of the drama is, to instruct without offending. It should delicately warn men of their follies and vices; but the author, as well as the actor, must guard against all appearance of accusing, or attempting to give direct lessons, things which are never relished among equals.

Foote has often been called the English Aristophanes; but had Swift given a dramatic form to his virulent satires, that title would have been more correctly applied to him than to Foote.*

* Swift's *John Bull*, in particular, very much resembles a satire of Aristophanes.

Aristophanes, who is so severely judged by Plutarch, has become one of the idols of British criticism. The Edinburgh Review declares, that in the democracy of Athens the censure of Aristophanes was more formidable than that of the Archons. He was the public journalist, whose business it was to record public events, to comment on the proceedings of men in power, to excite patriotism, to direct public spirit, and to denounce injustice. He was a critic who kept a jealous eye on the productions of contemporary authors, and guided the decisions of the judges of literary merit. The progress of civilization and information disable the modern poet from acting so important a part. It is not in France only that dramatic censors, those Procrusteses of literature, possess the power of mutilating the works which are submitted to their examination: in England, the power of the Lord Chamberlain is nearly as great as that of our censor, and his lordship's authority was frequently exercised to keep Foote in check.

The hatred of Dr. Johnson proved very mortifying to Foote, and the contempt of that surly moralist was, to him, a continual provocation, such as Aristophanes, certainly, never received from Socrates. Johnson was, however, one of the few contemporaries of Foote, whom the satirist was induced to spare, through the dread of severe retaliation.

But, in spite of Johnson, Foote certainly deserves a distinguished place among the English comic dramatists. Though he may have been a

mere buffoon in private life, he has shown himself capable of something better in several of his works, whose spirited dialogue and well-drawn characters are calculated to afford entertainment, even in the closet. His easy, elegant, and unaffected style, may be compared to the attic purity of his model, but the characters he introduces are less gross and more true to nature than those of the Athenian dramatist. Foote was not however more scrupulous than Aristophanes, and saw no harm in a laughable deception, even though it should border on immorality. Yet he wants the fanciful invention, the variety, and piquancy of his model. Above all, he is deficient in those brilliant poetic sallies, those unexpected appeals to the better feelings of the public, which, even in the most vulgar scenes, remind the reader of the important object Aristophanes had in view, under the comic mask of the buffoon.

The "Mayor of Garratt" is one of the severest political satires Foote ever wrote. It has been very seriously censured by some English critics, as a libel upon the law of election. Foote took the principal incident of the piece from a custom which prevails in the village of Garratt, where the inhabitants have a mock election for a mayor. The candidate who obtains the united suffrages of these burlesque electors is generally the most stupid and uncouth-looking beggar in the parish. All the forms of the law of election are carefully observed on these occasions. The rival candidates struggle hard for the privilege of addressing the

mob, and telling falsehoods with as much effrontery as any of the members of the honourable House of Commons. They promise the people that they will lower the price of bread, beer, &c. that they will accept of no place, that they will make all the old women bishops, &c. It is easy to conceive to what effect this little electioneering masquerade might be turned by the English Aristophanes. He himself played the part of Major Sturgeon, one of the most original caricatures on the British stage.

Foote waged everlasting war against antiquaries and virtuosi. In his farce entitled "Taste," there is a humorous trait of satire on the rage for collecting antiques. Some one observes to the pseudo-baron Groningen, that his antique bust has no nose; upon which the baron replies, with prodigious contempt for the ignorance of the remark, that the mutilation constitutes its whole value in the eye of a connoisseur, and that for his part he would not give a single shilling for it if it were perfect.

"The Minor" contains a collection of caricatures worthy to be placed beside the original creations of Hogarth's pencil. The scene in which Shift passes himself off for Mr. Smirk, would provoke the laughter of the laird of Monkbarns himself.

Foote determined to ridicule the taste for sentimental comedy, which was in his time so prevalent. He announced a new kind of entertainment at his theatre in the Haymarket, "The primitive Puppet-show," a drama, dedicated to the lovers of

tears, was to be represented by wooden puppets, and it attracted such crowds to the theatre, that even the orchestra was filled. The musicians performed the overture behind the scenes, and Foote advancing to the front of the stage, delivered an address which presents an admirable specimen of his style and manner. He attacked the Lord Chamberlain himself, while he affected to be merely giving an account of the worthy Mr. Punch, so much regretted by Tom Jones, and always so heartily welcomed as the diverting friend of our childhood.

LETTER XLI.

TO MADAME GUIZOT.

If the territory of the tragic muse has not of late been so unproductive in England as that of her smiling sister, that circumstance must be attributed to the labours of a female writer, and of three divines. It may naturally be supposed that the sex of Miss Joanna Baillie, and the functions of the Rev. Messrs. Maturin, Millman, and Croly, must debar them from a very intimate acquaintance with the Green Room. The consequence is, that their dramatic works, like the tragedies of some of their contemporaries, belong rather to general literature than to the drama. Mr. Mill,

man's pieces have been acted several times, whether he would or not, and Mr. Maturin has incurred the censure of his superiors for having consented to have his plays performed. Two tragedies, by Miss Baillie, have been represented and withdrawn from the stage.

Miss Baillie is a Scotch lady, and a niece of the two Hunters so celebrated in the medical world. Her brother, Dr. Baillie, is one of the principal physicians in London. As people are always curious to know the age of a celebrated female, and as my indiscretion cannot now be attended with any disagreeable consequences, I may mention that Miss Baillie was born in the year 1764. The first volume of her dramatic works, preceded by an introduction, was published anonymously in 1798. The second volume, which she dedicated to her brother, appeared with her name. Miss Baillie fancied she had laid the foundation of a new theory, but productions of a similar kind may be found in the literature of every nation in Europe.

That dramatic performance should have become the favourite amusement of every nation, is attributed by Miss Baillie to the sympathy and curiosity which men naturally feel in studying the passions of their fellow-creatures. Writers of tragedy have generally failed in the delineation of great characters, placed in the most trying situations in life. Shakspeare alone is excepted by Miss Baillie; and she seems not very ready to admit even this exception, for it is conveyed in a

note, and that only when she fancies she has converted her readers to her own opinion. She asserts, that the great error of dramatic poets has been in allowing themselves to be led away by their exclusive admiration of the works of the old writers, and preferring the ornaments of poetry to the imitation of nature; and there is certainly a great deal of truth in this remark, as long as we bear in mind that Miss Baillie applies it to her own countrymen as well as to us. Our critics, I think, will very readily agree with her, that since the age of Louis XIV. our writers, with the exception of those few whose works may be held as models of dramatic composition, have neglected the inexhaustible variety of nature, and re-produced, from generation to generation, the same characters and the same situations. The pompous and solemn gravity, which they appear to have deemed indispensable to the dignity of tragedy, has almost entirely excluded from their works those less striking, though more characteristic touches of nature, which so completely develope the real state of the mind. To delineate man in his moments of parade and action, is to afford but an imperfect view of him. Heroes, equally magnanimous in prosperity and adversity, and ever eloquent in the cause of virtue; warriors, as proud, irritable, and vindictive, as they are generous, brave, and disinterested; lovers, full of devotedness, tenderness, and sentiment; tyrants, as cowardly as cruel; and traitors, in whom perfidy and wickedness are instinctive—all are cast in one

regular and uniform mould. The faithful imitation of their models, and an attention to the beauties of style, and the dignity of subject, has, it is true, often led these writers to enrich their works with sublime imagery, noble thoughts, and generous sentiments; but in their eagerness to excel in these accessories of tragedy, which are alike common to every other form of composition, they have neglected the beauties which are more exclusively its own. The men whom tragedy calls into action are placed in an elevated sphere, and exposed to such great trials as few have to encounter in the ordinary course of existence. As examples applicable to ourselves, they cannot affect us much, and the only moral advantage we can derive from these dramatic pictures is, that they afford us a more extensive view of human nature, and inspire us with the admiration of virtue, or the hatred of vice. But if they be not represented in such a manner as to produce the effect of real and natural characters, the lessons we receive from them cannot be more impressive than those we gather from the pages of the poet or the moralist. Miss Baillie is of opinion that the principal object of tragedy, is to exhibit the human heart in its most undisguised state, namely, while under the influence of those violent and inherent passions, which, though apparently unexcited by external circumstances, gradually get entire possession of the soul, and destroy every amiable feeling. Dramatic poets have, generally, employed the passions only to

give variety to their characters, and animation to their scenes, instead of tracing them from their first germ to their complete developement. The heroes of tragedy are, for the most part, only transiently affected by the passions; or, if an author's object be to delineate the permanent influence of energetic passion, he usually makes choice of the very crisis of vehemence when there is no longer the least vestige of hesitation, distrust, and all those delicate and gradual traits of feeling which, perhaps, render the origin and first progress of every great passion a more interesting spectacle than its full maturity. This mode of representation may be suitable to feelings which are suddenly excited, and brief in their duration, such as anger, fear, and, in many instances, jealousy; but those tyrants of the soul, ambition, hatred, love, and, in fact, all the permanent passions of our nature, as their progress is irregular and varied, can be but imperfectly depicted by the exhibition of one of their transitory phases. In tragedy, powerful passions are generally opposed by events, rather than by passions of a contrary nature, and it frequently happens, that those events are of so important a character as to eclipse, as it were, the feelings with which they are brought into contact. Not only have the passions, generally speaking, been restrained and regulated, but the characters in whom their influence is represented are, by the employment of obscure, figurative language, deprived of the power of making themselves understood. An admiration

of the bold language employed by those whose minds are agitated by ideas or emotions too powerful to be expressed in the ordinary forms of speech, has led to the adoption of a figurative style, for the purpose of adorning tame sentiments of laboured verses. The eloquence of passion has also been still further impoverished by attempts to clothe it in imagery, or comparisons, however ingenious. With all due respect for Miss Baillie and the English, I am very much inclined to think that this is one of the principal defects of Shakspeare; who, by the too frequent employment of hyperbolical expressions in the language of his subordinate characters, often leaves nothing for his heroes but extravagant bombast, and ridiculous conceits. The taste of the age for which Shakspeare wrote, is the only excuse that can be made for this fault.

Miss Baillie's design was, to compose a series of tragedies, more simple in their general plan, less embellished by poetical ornament, and less pompous in their diction, than those of preceding writers. Above all, her principal object was, to trace the progress of powerful passions in the human heart, by selecting one particular passion as the subject of each drama. This plan, she says, is better calculated than any other to produce a moral effect, and to interest all classes of people. Her tragedies are accompanied by a series of comedies, written on a similar principle.

Comedy, according to Miss Baillie, represents men as they are found in the ordinary circum-

stances of life, with all the weaknesses, follies, and prejudices, which a close observation enables us to discover in them. We see them agitated by petty feelings of interest, by extravagant pursuits, and bound down to all the various fashions and customs of the world by vanity, caprice, and the spirit of imitation. Comedy also pourtrays those disagreeable or absurd singularities, which belong to particular classes of society. But Miss Baillie is of opinion that the grand object of comedy should be, to represent man under the influence of his passions, and to describe their origin and progress, amidst the trivial and every-day circumstances, which deprive them of sublimity, and destroy all the interest which is commonly felt for the mind which is under their controul. Comic dramatists, she says, have not erred less than tragic poets. The eternal variations of modes and manners, which furnish so many subjects of a novel and comic character; the variety of inventions, which gives birth to the ridiculous, and excites curiosity and laughter; and the admiration which is so generally bestowed on satirical remarks, witty repartees, or whimsical combinations of ideas;—these are the charms which have allured dramatic writers from a proper regard for the more lively interest which is felt in witnessing a faithful representation of nature. Miss Baillie's object is to create what may be called natural comedy, or comedy of character, which is neither the satirical comedy, with its lively repartees, and epigrammatic dialogue, nor the sentimental

comedy, with its affectation of morality, nor the comedy of intrigue, with its multiplicity of incidents.

Some of M. de Jouy's ideas, in his preface to "Sylla," resemble, I think, those of Miss Baillie. I have not his work before me, but Jouy may, perhaps, have discovered the theory of tragedy of character, as well as Miss Baillie.

Both the system and the plays of Miss Baillie have been the subject of critical censure. It has been observed, that the true object of every dramatic work is to please and interest, and this object may be obtained as well by situation as by character. Character distinguishes men one from another, while passion renders them all nearly alike. A predominant passion, instead of developing the character, perverts it. To attempt to delineate character by tracing the progress of a passion, would be to follow a cloud, in order to distinguish more clearly the objects it envelopes. Besides, unity of passion is impossible; for, to give due effect to the energy of any particular passion, it is necessary to oppose to it another of a different kind, so as to produce a powerful conflict in the heart. The objects and the victims of the hero's passion should also form some portion of dramatic interest. Miss Baillie has been forced to submit to this necessity for contrasts. Her first tragedy, "Count Basil," is founded on love; yet the Count's soul is divided between that passion and glory. The second, "De Montfort," is founded on hatred, and affords a better illustration

of Miss Baillie's intention and general plan. But hatred is a passion of slow growth, and it would have been too great a violation of the unity of time, to have attempted to trace it from its commencement. Yet even here, De Montfort's hatred for Rezenvelt is long opposed by a strong feeling of honour. The same observations may be applied to this lady's tragedies founded on ambition.

The most reasonable objection that can be urged against Miss Baillie's dramas, is their want of interest. She fears to distract the attention of the spectator by multiplying incidents; thus the progress of her action, though regular, is always slow. There is nothing new in her mode of delineating her characters, by making them, like those of Shakspeare, unfold themselves by the operation of accidental circumstances, and by those genuine touches of nature, which escape from them when unobserved. They do not, however, possess that air of individuality which lays such hold of the imagination. They are, in fact, theories personified, mere generalisations of a few intellectual attributes. Miss Baillie has a decided predilection for virtuous characters; but she makes them so very good, and reasonable, that they become too cold for dramatic effect. In her comedies, she has completely failed; they may be termed, moral tales in dialogue, rather than dramas. In her solicitude to avoid the affectation and false show of her contemporaries, she has forgotten that nature is not always incompatible with elegance.

In tragedy, indeed, the diction and poetry of our authoress are sometimes sufficient to redeem her defects. She has steered equally clear of the exaggeration and the monotonous pomp of the artificial style, and the mawkish simplicity and prosaic ecstacies which the imitation of Kotzebue brought so much into fashion. Her dialogue is evidently formed on the model of the finest productions of Shakspeare, and she has, in a great measure, adopted his words. She has succeeded, oftener than the critics are willing to admit, in imitating the manner of the great poet, in those passages which require animation and vigour; but she is less happy in the familiar style.

The Edinburgh reviewers were by no means indulgent towards the labours of their fair country-woman, and, on the appearance of her third volume, Miss Baillie seemed to have abandoned her favourite system. The critics, however, were only the more severe, and she returned to her original plan. Her tragedy of "De Montfort," is the only one which has met with any degree of success on the stage, and for that it was indebted to the masterly acting of John Kemble.

The hatred which rages in De Montfort's breast, is only to be extinguished by the blood of his enemy. Having been disarmed by Rezenvelt every time he challenged him to combat, he, at length, waylays, and murders him in a forest. This crime is accompanied by circumstances of so horrible a nature, that it is difficult to imagine how they could have had birth in a female mind. Gene-

rally speaking, Miss Baillie delights in scenes of bloodshed, and excels in painting that superstitious terror which precedes and follows the commission of great crimes. She introduces a new species of actor at the commencement of the fourth act; viz. an owl, whose dismal cries make the murderer and the victim tremble, successively. Rezenvelt's assassination does not take place on the stage. The authoress transports us, in the mean time, into the gothic chapel of a convent, which is feebly lighted by two torches, placed over a recently erected tomb; the long fretted windows rattle in the wind; the organ plays a solemn prelude, and some nuns, advancing in slow procession, gather round the tomb, and chaunt a funeral hymn, their last farewell to one of their departed companions. A lay sister suddenly rushes in, and with haggard eye, dishevelled hair, and trembling voice, informs them that she has heard the cries of a man perishing by the hand of a murderer. The abbess attributes her distracted manner to the effect of some frightful vision, and directs the holy sisters to continue their chaunt; but they are again interrupted by a loud and repeated knocking at the gate of the monastery. A monk is admitted into the chapel, and he exclaims with horror, that he has just beheld a dead body weltering in blood. Presently another arrives, still more agitated and alarmed; he informs them, that as he was coming homeward, struggling against the fury of the

storm, he perceived by the dim light of his lantern, the features of a man, who fixed on him a ghastly look of despair. All are convinced that this must be the murderer. A party of the monks go out in quest of him, and meet with a man whose every feature bears the hideous stamp of guilt; his hands and garments are stained with blood. This is De Montfort. They ask his name; he replies, that he has no name, and preserves a sullen silence. The sister who overheard the dying voice of his victim, gazes upon him with horror, and exclaims :—

" O holy saints! that this should be the man
Who did against his fellow lift the stroke,
Whilst he so loudly call'd—
Still in mine ear it sounds: O murder! murder.

DE MONTFORT. (*Starting.*) He calls again!

SISTER. No, he did not call; for now his voice is still'd
'Tis past!"

De Montfort, in a tone of deep anguish, repeats, "'Tis past," utters a groan and falls senseless. Whilst the monks are raising him, the dead body of Rezenvelt is brought in and uncovered. De Montfort is struck motionless with horror. An awful scene succeeds; he is left alone with the dead body of his victim, and he consigns himself to the most violent remorse. He is driven to such a pitch of phrenzy, that at last he dashes his head against the wall. This frightful spectacle is

relieved by the arrival of De Montfort's sister, whose touching and generous affection soothes the last bitter moments of his life.

The long tragedy of "Ethwald," of which the subject is ambition, is no less terrible in its details. This piece, perhaps, bears too strong a resemblance to Shakspeare's "Macbeth;" but it is a brilliant historical picture of the heptarchy. The two tragedies, founded on fear, are less effective. One of them presents a picture of female madness, a favourite subject with English poets; and, in this, Miss Baillie has displayed great power of conception, and uncommon vigour of style. But the most elegant, if not the most faultless of her compositions, is, a sort of serious opera, founded on hope; the extreme simplicity of its subject is elevated by the beauty and freshness of its poetic details, charms of which no description can convey any idea.

But there is not one of Miss Baillie's works that does not deserve to be read and studied. It is to be regretted that her dramas are not more decidedly adapted to scenic representation. She herself very candidly regrets the want of popular applause. In France, the theatre is still the capitol in which our poets receive the laurel which is most gratifying to their ambition. In England, on the contrary, the stage is now consigned to the triumphs of the scene painter and machinist, and men of real talent disdain to enter the lists of dramatic composition. Yet Miss Baillie wrote with the intention of having her dramas performed, with

some slight alterations. She obtained the applause she confesses she wished for, on the representation of her national piece, entitled, "The Family Legend," at Edinburgh. Sir Walter Scott wrote the prologue to that pleasing picture of Scottish manners in the middle ages.

Many English poets have adopted the dramatic form for their productions, while at the same time they affect to decline the jurisdiction of the people in the only department of literature which, notwithstanding the progress of information among the lower classes, has continued to engage their attention.

LETTER XLII.

TO M. VILLEMAIN.

THE modern poets of Great Britain may frequently be charged with yielding too much to imagination, and neglecting to observe the limits which good taste prescribes; but the weeds which mingle with the good seed, are here regarded only as a proof of the richness of the soil.

Among those writers who are less distinguished for the judicious treatment of their subjects, than for a superabundance of ideas and splendid imagery, Mr. Millman is, perhaps, least sparing in the use of metaphors, epithets, and all those orna-

ments which Dryden, though he himself occasionally indulged in *concetti*, terms the *Delilahs of style*. Mr. Millman, after celebrating a national hero in his poem of "Samor," apparently became conscious that his sacred calling was more consistent with the task of treating subjects selected from scriptural history.

He seems, however, to have been instinctively led to make choice of the fine climate of Italy as the scene of his first tragedy. It is surprising how Mr. Millman could have contrived to spin five acts out of such a story as "Fazio;" but they are five acts of poetical amplification. The story is briefly as follows:—Fazio, a young Florentine of very slender fortune, marries Bianca, who is as poor as himself, and for a time, they both live on love and hope. Fazio is a philosopher, but no sage. In his eagerness for wealth, he devotes himself to the search of the philosopher's stone, instead of embracing philosophy herself, which would have taught him to be content with his lot. His midnight labours are suddenly interrupted by an old miser, named Bartholo, who lives alone, amidst his hoarded treasures, in the next house. Having been attacked and mortally wounded by robbers, the old man comes to seek assistance from Fazio, and expires in his arms. Fazio is unable to withstand the temptation. Bartholo is destitute of friends or relatives, and there is no heir to his enormous wealth but the state, and that, Fazio thinks, is already rich enough. He secretly buries the body in a corner of his garden, and taking

the keys of the miser's coffers, he hastens to possess himself of the treasures. Fazio gives out that he has discovered the *philosopher's stone*—Bianca alone is in the secret. They now remove to a magnificent palace, where they give sumptuous entertainments, and are surrounded by flatterers, somewhat resembling those in Shakspeare's "Timon."

These, unfortunately, are not the only triumphs which engross the vanity of Fazio. Before his acquaintance with Bianca, he had aspired to the love of the Marchioness Aldabella, a haughty and unfeeling coquette, who had for some time held him captive to her charms, for the mere pleasure of spurning him at last. Fazio now seeks to attract and triumph over her in his turn; but the artful Aldabella once more contrives to ensnare him. The slighted Bianca becomes a prey to all the torments of jealousy. How to withdraw her husband from her rival is the only object which occupies her thoughts. She recollects that while Fazio remained poor he had been despised by Aldabella, and she secretly vents imprecations on the wealth which has led him into the snare.

Meantime the Duke of Florence and the senate are assembled, to enquire into the cause of the sudden disappearance of Bartholo. His coffers have been found empty, the ports are crowded by his vessels, and the warehouses by his goods, and the interest on his usurious loans remains unclaimed. While the duke and his counsellors are lost in vain conjectures, a female is suddenly

announced, who desires to make a communication on the subject of the mysterious event. On being introduced, she informs them that Bartholo is dead, and that they will find his remains in the garden of a small house, which formerly belonged to Giraldi Fazio. She directs the officers of justice to the house of Aldabella, and entreats them to tear him thence without delay, without even allowing him time to give her a parting kiss. This female is, of course, no other than Bianca herself, who, though closely veiled while giving her information, discovers herself when Fazio is conducted into the presence of the judges, and appears before him as an unanswerable witness. But her accusation is attended by more serious consequences than, in the madness of her jealousy, she had intended. Fazio is accused of having murdered the old miser, and is condemned to be executed.

With so feeble a plot, and such characters as those of a robber and faithless husband, an artful and selfish coquette, and a wife, whose accusation sends her husband to the scaffold, it could have been no easy matter to produce any very striking interest. Yet it cannot be denied that Mr. Millman has succeeded in attaching an interest to the fate of Fazio, through the very weakness which, while it leads him so easily into error, is, at the same time, united with generous sensibility. Towards the close of the piece, too, his misfortunes give a certain degree of dignity to his character. A noble feeling of resignation succeeds the painful surprise caused by Bianca's accusation.

He has yet sufficient strength of mind to stifle his reproaches. Not a sigh, not a murmur, escapes him, and his cool courage contrasts admirably with the despair of Bianca. Their farewell scene in the prison is extremely affecting, and Fazio's burst of paternal feeling, when Bianca, in the delirium of grief, throws out a vague hint of having destroyed her children, is truly sublime:—

> "Fazio. Oh! thou has not been
> So wild a rebel to the will of God!
> If that thou hast, 'twill make my passionate arms,
> That ring thee round so fondly, drop off from thee,
> Like sere and wither'd ivy; make my farewell
> Spoken in such suffocate and distemper'd tone,
> 'Twill sound more like———
> Bianca. They live! thank God, they live!"
>
> . . . . . .

Mr. Millman's poetic talents are particularly conspicuous in his delineation of the character of Bianca. He has contrived to preserve an air of nature and truth in her restless affection, in the torments, suspicions, and phrenzy of her jealousy, and in the pathetic expression of her love and remorse. Unfortunately, the selfish coquetry of Aldabella, and her improbable caprices, are not sufficient to constitute a character, and the subordinate parts are almost insignificant. The tragedy commences at the third act; but it is merely an heroic poem in dialogue. The frequenters of the English theatres are too fond of a multiplicity of interlocutors, of the rapid movements of a two-fold plot, and a complication of incidents, to permit the frequent representation of Fazio; yet few

pieces have been more read and praised by the critics!

"The Fall of Jerusalem" is still better deserving of this last species of success. It is an epic drama, forming a most brilliant illustration of the fifth book of Josephus's history. Were I to judge of this production merely by its poetry, which is rich in sentiments of tenderness and sublimity, and the enthusiastic expression of the transports of feeling, I should assign to Mr. Millman a place beside the author of *Athalie* and *Esther*. But the want of connection between the different scenes, and the introduction of secondary characters, who are of no other use than to deliver the speeches allotted to them, are defects which leave him far behind Racine. At the same time, "The Fall of Jerusalem" claims admiration, not merely for the inspiration of some of its lyric effusions, and the harmonious simplicity of some fragments of the dialogue, but the poem, taken as a whole, produces a solemn impression of awe and pity, worthy of the imposing catastrophe it celebrates. The simplicity of the plot may be considered as a merit, in a subject which is but the authentic accomplishment of a prophecy. Mr. Millman leads us over ground still tinged with the blood of the Saviour. All the characters he has introduced are historical, with the exception of the two daughters of Simon the Assassin, who are, in fact, the heroines of the poem.

The tragedy opens with a scene between Titus and his officers, contemplating, from the top of

the Mount of Olives, the city which is doomed to the flames on the following day. The rhetoric of the Oxford Professor is, perhaps, rather too obvious in the studied language of the Romans. Titus, who is destined to distinguish himself at a later period as the most merciful of Princes, endeavours to account to himself for the supernatural impulse which compels him to endeavour to efface a whole nation from the earth. He attributes it to the irresistible power of Fate; ignorant of the God who has chosen him to be the blind instrument of his vengeance. This poetical idea is happily introduced to strike the imagination of the reader; but it is only an introduction to the tragedy which is going forward in the besieged city, where greater ravages are produced by anarchy and furious fanaticism, than by famine or the enemy's sword. The Jews, amidst their misfortunes, are less indignant against the Romans than against themselves. The miracles they have witnessed serve only to encrease the fury of their chiefs, who still dispute the possession of the ruins of their city, and the lifeless remains of their countrymen. John is the chief of the Sadducees; and to his crimes and profane principles, his rival attributes the misfortunes of the nation. His rival is Simon the Pharisee, whom Josephus describes as an implacable zealot, a brave warrior, and a skilful politician, but whom Mr. Millman has made, improperly, a fanatic, more superstitious than cruel. Simon has two daughters, both young and beautiful. Salone, the eldest, is

distinguished by a proud and ardent spirit. She is enthusiastic, even to madness, in her devotion to the law of Moses, and the future glory of Israel. But a more terrestrial passion is mingled with her religious exaltation; she loves a young hero, on whom, as well as on his father, the Hebrews rely as the last hope of their deliverance. She seats herself daily on the ramparts of the city; feasting her eager eyes on the continued conflict of the hostile forces, and watching the movements of her beloved Amariah.

To Simon's second daughter the poet has given a more timid character, calmer, firmer, and more mild affections. Miriam is attached to one of the Christians, who had taken refuge in Pella from the commencement of the siege. She secretly shares the religious faith of her lover, but refuses to quit her father at the hour of danger. Simon daily finds provisions, which are brought to him by an invisible hand. He supposes them to be the gift of his guardian angel; but they are brought by Miriam, who receives them from her lover at the fountain of Siloe, whither she goes every morning to meet him, through a passage worked in the rock, and known only to herself. Here Javan renews his solicitations to induce her to fly from Jerusalem, whose destruction is hourly expected; yet Miriam still resists, determined on dying with her father, from whom, on her return home, she hears a horrible account of a search he has been making with John and Eleazer, in the houses of those who were suspected of concealing their pro-

visions. They surprised a poor woman, who had been kneading a wheaten cake. She was gazing on her sleeping children, and wept at the thought of seeing their little eyes beam with joy at the unusual sight of food. She had not tasted it herself, and was just raising the coverlet, under which her little charges reposed, locked in each other's arms, when John seized the cake, and mocking her with a savage smile, trampled it under foot! —Miriam, on being left alone, invokes God's forgiveness for her father, in a hymn worthy of the finest inspirations of Milton.

On the following day, Miriam again repairs to the fountain, while the Hebrew chiefs, having been repulsed in a sortie, address mutual reproaches to each other. The High Priest breaks in upon them, and entreats them to forget for a while their own private animosities, to revenge an insult offered to God in his very temple—where, in the midst of that day's solemnities, a voice had dared to utter an invocation to the pretended Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. He calls on them to assist in detecting and punishing the blasphemer. Simon exclaims, that even though his own child had committed such a crime, he would be the first to sacrifice her. The enthusiastic Salone murmurs apart the name of Miriam, and attributes her absence to the consciousness of her crime. She rushes into the midst of the chiefs to denounce her, and suddenly stops short, struck with the remembrance of her mother, who, with her dying breath, had recommended her to love

and cherish her sister. While she thus hesitates, Abiram, the false prophet, breaks in, and, announcing that he comes in the name of the Almighty, exclaims:—

> "Brave Amariah, son of John! Salone,
> Daughter of Simon! thus I join their hands;
> And thus I bless the wedded and the beautiful!
> And thus I bind the Captains of Jerusalem
> In the strong bonds of unity and peace."

Here Abiram sings a nuptial chant, to which the populace reply with acclamations. Amariah and Salone readily obey the will of Heaven, which is thus in unison with their own secret feelings, and Simon, hoping that from this alliance, commanded by Jehovah, may spring the promised Redeemer of Israel, hastens the celebration of the ceremony, under the guidance of Abiram.

The poet again introduces Miriam and Javan, who, after once more vainly urging her to accompany him, takes what he believes to be his last farewell of the daughter of Simon.

Meanwhile, at the approach of night, the streets of Jerusalem are filled with crowds of the unfortunate Jews. In their terror, they recount the numerous prodigies which have long threatened the nation. One speaks of the sword suspended for whole months over the city; another of aërial armies fighting on fiery chariots. A Levite arrives, and relates that the great gate of the temple had that moment opened of itself, and had resisted all human efforts to close it. The prophets are

struck dumb with astonishment. Suddenly the sounds of joyful music announce the marriage of Amariah and Salone; but while the bridal song is celebrating the happiness of the young couple, a threatening voice is heard exclaiming, "Woe! woe! woe!" It is the voice of the son of Hananiah, who had repeated, for seven years, this mournful cry, in spite of the punishments inflicted on him to compel him to desist. When the siege commenced, he had ceased his exclamation, as if the prediction were accomplished. He now comes for the last time to prophecy the ruin of Jerusalem and his own destruction; for scarcely has he added the words, "Woe to the son of Hananiah!" when a stone, darted from the enemy's engines, lays him lifeless on the ground. Simon and John quit the bridal banquet, more than ever elated by the hope of triumph. They disperse the crowd, whom they reproach for their cowardly forebodings; and they themselves retire to prepare, by a few hours' repose, for the victory which they imagine is awaiting them on the morrow. Miriam alone lingers behind, deploring the blindness of those who are most dear to her. She murmurs a prayer, when the thunder peals in the heavens, as if to light the fire by which Israel is about to be destroyed. Meanwhile the Romans scale the walls, and their trumpets sound the charge in the streets of Salem.

The Jews fly for refuge to the temple. Simon joins them, and until he sees the flames playing above the roof of the sanctuary, he still confi-

dently believes that the God of Israel will save his people. Miriam, bewildered with alarm, wanders into the streets. With a momentary feeling of regret, she recollects that she might have fled in safety with Javan; but she immediately banishes this thought, to prepare herself for death, by invoking the name of Christ.

An old man hearing her pronounce the name of the Saviour, exclaims:—

> "Who spake of Christ?
> What hath that name to do with saving here?
> He's here, he's here, the Lord of desolation,
> Begirt with vengeance! in the fire above,
> And fire below! in all the blazing city
> Behold him manifest!"

Miriam enquires what he knows of Christ, and he informs her that he beheld him labouring up the hill, bearing the cross on his bleeding shoulders, while from his thorn-encircled brow he shook off the blood, and gazed with patient pity on the infuriate multitude.

> "Could'st thou see
> The cross, the agony, and still hard of heart!"

The old man relates, that feeling ashamed of a momentary compunction, with which he had been inspired by the sublime resignation of the Son of God, he joined his voice to those of the multitude assembled on Mount Calvary, and exclaimed, "*Crucify him!*" He is at length convinced of the divinity of the victim; but his tardy faith is that of despair. He refuses to express his penitence

by a prayer, and departs, venting execrations on his own grey hairs.

Miriam, with horror, perceives Salone pale and bleeding. She has just escaped from the flames in which their house is enveloped, and she is wrapt only in her nuptial veil, while the unfaded bridal wreath is still hanging in her dishevelled hair.

Salone informs her sister that on the first alarm occasioned by the attack of the city, Amariah had suddenly risen from his couch and rushed out. She thus continues :—

> "He came back and kissed me; and he said—
> I know not what he said ;— but there was something
> Of Gentile ravisher, and his beauteous bride—
> Me, me he meant; he call'd me beauteous bride,—
> And he stood o'er me with a sword so bright
> My dazzled eyes did close. And presently,
> Methought, he smote me with the sword; but then
> He fell upon my neck, and wept upon me,
> And I felt nothing but his burning tears."

Miriam endeavours to sooth her delirium, but in vain. The enthusiast expires on her bosom.

A Roman soldier approaches Miriam. She recognizes him as one who has several times crossed her path. She appeals to his honour and his piety, conjuring him to spare her by the love he bears for his own wife or sister. This soldier is no other than Javan in disguise. He conducts his beloved in silence to the fountain of Siloe, where he places her in safety amidst a choir of Christians, who address a last adieu to the holy city in a hymn of sublime poetic beauty.

I have given you but an imperfect sketch of this work, which must be regarded as Mr. Millman's master-piece. No contemporary writer has succeeded better in rendering a scriptural subject the vehicle of poetry. The *Fall of Jerusalem* has a character of religious inspiration. The pompous strain of language employed by Mr Millman is the natural form for such a subject; and in this poem it produces no less solemn an effect than in the fine verses of Milton. After the Fall of Jerusalem, Mr. Milman published two other dramatic poems, which, however, produced a far less impressive effect, perhaps on account of the too frequent repetition of the same forms of style and the same ideas.

I shall therefore say nothing of his *Feast of Balthazar*, nor his *Martyr of Antioch*, which, unfortunately for Mr. Millman, at once call to mind Polyeucte and Cymodoce.

Mr. Millman is Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford,; and he has become a contributor to the Quarterly Review. In France, Mr. Millman would be a monarchial and religious writer. I allude to this classification, which with us is rather political than literary; because Mr. Millman commenced his poetic career by a ministerial paraphrase of the greatest event of 1814.

The *Judicium Regale* (certainly rather a pedantic title,) is a sort of vision, in which the author fancies himself at the judgment pronounced upon Buonaparte by the assembled sovereigns. The accusers are the people of the different nations of

Europe, who by turns declare their grievances. There is nothing very remarkable in this production; but in noticing it, I cannot refrain from observing that there is not an English poet who has not written at least a sonnet, either in praise or condemnation of Buonaparte. His death produced a powerful impression in England. His name, which is continually introduced into conversation, operates like a charm, and when printed on the title page of a book, or on a posting bill, it attracts universal attention. At first a Frenchman cannot help being struck with this universal feeling of admiration or awe, surviving the object by whom it has been inspired. But whatever may be his opinions, let him beware of the snare that is invariably laid for him by the Englishman who professes to be a *Buonapartist*. The perfidious praise is soon changed into national boasting; and on the other hand, disapprobation, which may, at first, seem to be directed against a single man, soon includes half France in its criminations. But in England the majority are the admirers of Napoleon. His bust is as common as that of Shakspeare; and his name is an ordinary term of comparison. There is exhibited in London an extraordinary animal, half lion, and half tiger, called the Bonassus; and the proprietor invites the public to go and admire the *Buonaparte of the Managerie*. A quack advertises what he terms *Napoleon's Blacking*, adding that he obtained the receipt from one of his Imperial Majesty's aide-de-camps; and in some of the shops in London I ob-

served a little bronze image of Buonaparte supporting gas burners. Thus is the sun of Austerlitz transformed into a lamp.

LETTER XLIII.

TO M. LESOURD.

To pass from the pious hymns of the Reverend Professor of Oxford, to the gloomy reveries of the humble curate of Dublin, is to descend from Eden to the infernal regions. To mention Mr. Maturin, the author of *Bertram* and *Melmoth*, is to conjure up all the horrors which the wildest imagination can conceive; to array before the mind's eye a host of sybils, demoniacs, parricides, executioners, victims, &c. I shall, elsewhere, enter into an examination of the romances in which the conceptions of Mr. Maturin surpass the phantasmagoria of Mrs. Radcliffe, and the metaphysics of Godwin; but in which, by the extravagance of his style, he seems to prove that he always writes under the influence of some extraordinary exaltation of mind. As the author of *Bertram*, *Fredolfo*, and *Manuel*, Mr. Maturin would be very accurately characterized, were a painter to represent him foaming at the mouth in the agony of convulsions. It is, however, impossible to recollect, without feelings of pain, the declaration which the unfortunate poet himself makes in one of his

prefaces ; namely, that he writes tragedies and romances, because his stipend is insufficient for his subsistence. It is disgraceful to the English clergy to suffer one of its members to prostitute his talent, and degrade his character by these affectations of extravagance and horror. On reading the blasphemous ravings which Maturin puts into the mouths of his heroes, I have often felt that distressing sensation which is experienced on seeing a beggar feign a fit of epilepsy for the sake of extorting charity.

Mr. Maturin's colleagues answer his complaints by observing, that if he has incurred ecclesiastical censure, it was not until after he had sinned against propriety by the production of his first tragedy.

Fortunately for the author of *Bertram*, he excited the interest of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, to whom he was indebted for the support and encouragement he has received from actors and booksellers. He is, I believe, under particular obligations to Kean ; and, I hope, for the honour of the English public, that but for the performance of that distinguished actor, *Bertram* would not have enjoyed the enthusiastic success it met with. This tragedy is more horrible than Schiller's *Robbers ;* but I need not give you any description of it, as it is sufficiently known in France, through the medium of the translation, in which, however, some of the most revolting and absurd passages are modified. But those who have read only the original drama, are at a loss to determine whether

it is not more ridiculous than immoral, for its extravagance frequently borders on parody. It is said, that Schiller often reproached himself for having written the *Robbers*, which he regarded as a youthful folly; but certainly there is nothing in that production so revolting as the adultery which is revealed in the fourth act of *Bertram*.

The tragedy of *Fredolfo* was not so successful as *Bertram*: its principal character is a sort of demon in the form of a dwarf. *Manuel* was not better received, and does not demand any particular notice.

Maturin now intends to write nothing but romances, and of these I shall hereafter have occasion to speak.*

Mr. Shiel, another Irish author, has written several tragedies, which have had their day of popularity, but which will hold no place among the standard productions of English literature. I do not even except his *Evadne*, though it is a copy of Shirley's *Traitor*; but, perhaps, that very circumstance produces an unfavourable impression. Shiel has closely imitated Shirley's style, but he evidently writes in a language with which he is not familiar; or, rather, he has not sufficiently entered into the spirit of the authors whom he has chosen as his models. There is a degree of

* While correcting this proof for the press, I have heard of the death of Mr. Maturin, and I take this opportunity of expressing my opinion, that if he had not been the most extravagant of writers, he would perhaps have been the greatest genius of English literature.

obscurity in his language, for he frequently seems not to have thoroughly seized the idea which he intends to express. *Evadne* has the advantage of being a most interesting subject; and the author has not confined himself to giving exclusive prominence to one particular character. But, compared with Shirley's tragedy, *Evadne* is merely a tame copy, and the characters are deficient in vigour and truth to nature.

Shirley was a very original author, and he is too much neglected by those who study the works of the old English writers. He frequently gives a charming poetic colouring to his females. The character of Evadne, which is merely a copy of Shirley's Amidea, preserves almost all its original beauty in Shiel's tragedy. The scene from which the piece takes its second title, *The Statue*, would, I think, be quite novel on our stage. I subjoin a brief description of the story.

The King of Naples, a sovereign corrupted by dissipation, is under the influence of a perfidious and treacherous courtier, named Ludovico, who stimulates him with a criminal passion for Evadne, in the hope of rendering her the victim of the resentment he cherishes towards her brother Colonna, a young Neapolitan nobleman of proud and generous spirit. Ludovico is the political enemy of Colonna, and he plants the seeds of discord between him and Vicencio, the lover of Evadne, by persuading the latter that he has been deceived, and that the prince enjoys his mistress's favours.

Colonna wounds Vicencio in a duel, and is arrested as a murderer; when he is informed, that he can be pardoned only on condition of surrendering up his sister to the monarch. Excited by the artful insinuations of Ludovico, he intimates his intention of sacrificing the tyrant. Ludovico pretends to be interested in his revenge, and himself conducts the prince to Colonna's palace. But Evadne prevails on her brother to defer, for one hour, the fulfilment of his intention, and she makes him conceal himself in a saloon, which is adorned with the statues of their ancestors. To this saloon the prince is introduced, in the full confidence of attaining the accomplishment of his wishes. Evadne avoids making any serious reply to his propositions, but requests him to examine the statues, and to listen to their history. One represents a warrior of the name of Charlemagne, who seems to be gazing proudly on his unblemished escutcheon. Another is Guelfo, the murderer, who stabbed his daughter, rather than suffer her to fall into the hands of the Saracens. A third is an individual well known to the prince: it is the father of Evadne, and she describes, with enthusiasm, his virtues and the services he rendered to the state and his sovereign. Then suddenly rushing towards the statue, she fervently embraces it and exclaims:—

"Approach, my lord!
Come in the midst of all mine ancestry!
Come, and unloose me from my father's arms!

Come, if you dare, and in his daughter's shame,
Reward him for the last drops of his blood,
Shed for his prince's life!"

This appeal to the generous feelings of the monarch is effectual. He execrates the base counsel of Ludovico; and Colonna, who now appears, offers to convince him of the perfidy of his favourite. The king conceals himself in his turn, at the approach of Ludovico; and the latter, supposing the crime to be accomplished, gives loose to his joy, and jeers Colonna for having been the instrument of his designs. He imagines that he is about to reap the fruit of his revenge, by delivering the criminal up to justice, and seating himself upon the throne. He summons a guard, which he has in readiness; but, at the same moment the king enters, and Ludovico perishes in a contest with Colonna.

Shiel's tragedy of the *Apostate* is very inferior to *Evadne*. The characters are merely personifications of all the common-places of melo-drama; and the author has, in consequence, liberally availed himself of the aid of the scene-painter and mechanist. The conflict between the Moors and the Christians in Spain, presents, in itself, a poetic spectacle; and the scenery of the *Apostate* exhibits palaces in flames, and the interior of the prisons of the Inquisition. Mr. Thomas Moore somewhere cites Mr. Shiel as a great tragic author.

English tragedy is daily losing some portion of that originality which once justified the irregularity of its system. Of the authors who seem to have

hoped to revive it with its old attributes, by studying the poets of the reign of Elizabeth, some have not been able to cover the improbability of romantic situations by poetry of style; and others have fallen into the error of adopting language in no way suited to the present state of civilization. Some, instead of painting real life and the passions in broad and energetic colours, have sunk into gloomy metaphysical abstractions. Finally, those who have appealed more directly to the judgment of the public, have sought to dazzle the eye by splendour of decoration, rather than to interest the mind by the genuine beauties of tragedy. The characters are all moulded on uniform models, and they usually consist of a remorseless tyrant, an insipid and unnatural lover, a superstitious priest, and a heroine, who, for the most part, closes her career by going mad.

Sanguine hopes were entertained that Lord Byron would distinguish himself in tragic composition; but the regenerator of the English drama has not yet appeared. He is not to be found either in Barry Cornwall, the author of *Mirandola*, or in Mr. Sotheby, the translator of *Oberon*, whose tragedies made a little noise, but are now forgotten. Knowles and Croly would perhaps deserve honourable mention; but they are too fond of indulging in those long declamatory speeches, which are generally fatal to dramatic effect.

LETTER XLIV.

TO M. L'ABBE ——.

You wish to know, my dear Abbé, whether, among the clergymen to whom I have been introduced in London, I have met Fielding's virtuous Harrison, or Goldsmith's worthy Primrose, whose patriarchal simplicity you are inclined to regard as wholly fictitious. I must confess, that I have as yet seen nothing resembling either the one or the other; but when I visit the country, I trust I shall be more fortunate; and I shall, perhaps, even become acquainted with an Abraham Adams, whose original simplicity cannot fail to interest you when you allow yourself to read Fielding. But, my dear Abbé, let me warn you that that faithful painter of English manners is here on the proscribed list, and that he can only be read by stealth in this moral age. I hope shortly to have the pleasure of introducing to you a young English clergyman; but you must not even let him know that you read Richardson, who is not now recommended from the pulpit, as he used to be. This young gentleman will present you with a pamphlet, written by one of his Oxford friends, in which you will be surprised to find it proved, that Sir Walter Scott's novels are absolute profanations

of the Scriptures; and the author, above all, unmercifully anathematizes the Scottish puritans. You will ask me, whether methodism has reformed the English church, and whether the puritans, who were so outrageously insulted in the comedies of Charles the Second's reign, and who have since been more seriously censured in numberless pamphlets, have at length refuted the poets and libelists, by realizing the pictures of Dr. Harrison and Mr. Primrose. I shall not give a direct answer to this question; but in making you acquainted with all I have collected from reading and ocular observation, I shall furnish you with some preliminary information respecting the personal character of the clergy, to which I shall add new particulars when I return from my excursion to Scotland, where new objects of comparison will present themselves to me.

You love truth, and consequently you always lend a ready ear to discussion. You will therefore, I trust, listen patiently to all I have to say, while I attempt to give you an idea of the present state of the church in England. Being no very profound theologist, and living, as I now do, in the midst of heretics, I shall naturally employ some of their phraseology; but my boldness will afford me an additional claim on your attention, and I shall most readily yield to your refutations. I shall feel the less scrupulous, in allowing myself to speak like the ministers of the English church, because of all heresies theirs bears the closest affinity to catholicism. They now stand in greater

fear of Calvin than the Pope, whom they no longer burn in effigy, as they used to do. The government is their auxiliary against popery, which it takes upon itself the task of persecuting in Ireland. But they have to oppose, by their own efforts, the various dissenting sects, some of which threaten to subvert the power and influence of the *constitutional religion*. I make use of this expression, because the English church is at once a religious and a political institution.

With the first seeds of the reformation, weeds crept into the field of English catholicism. The minds of the people were, for the most part, wavering and undecided, when the polygamy of Henry VIII. by separating that monarch from the church of Rome, without making him renounce his despotism in religion, founded the English faith, which was finally established by the policy of Elizabeth, who dexterously availed herself of the ideas of her father's ministers. Flattering the passions and the arbitrary spirit of Henry, Cranmer and Cromwell perceived that it was time to grant the people a change, which would silence the importunities of the reformers. It would seem that they foresaw all the future encroachments of presbyterianism. The ministers of Henry and Elizabeth, when they freed the nation from the exactions and the proud influence of the church of Rome, by pretending to make common cause with the people, and exclaiming even more loudly than the latter against the new Babylon, formed a sort of league between the crown and the re-

formers. But the adoption of new religious ideas by the government had no other effect than to enrich the royal treasury, and the two-fold aristocracy of the high clergy, and the courtiers, at the expence of the dealers in indulgences, and the monkish proprietors. All the rigour of the democratic theories of the reformation was softened down under the bishop's lawn sleeves. Evangelical republicanism was confined to the hearts of the puritans; and when at length it broke out with unrestrained fury, in the reign of Charles I. its re-action served only to prepare another re-action against itself, for violence has never founded a permanent ascendancy. Cromwell could not entirely subdue it, after having connected it with his glory and his power.

On the return of the Stuarts, the English church, which is only a modification of catholicism, resumed the ascendancy. The episcopal aristocracy recovered all their privileges, together with the monopoly of riches and honours. Finally, the revolution of 1688 was but a new guarantee to the power of the English church against the church of Rome. The first democratic ferment of the reformation, the subversion of the supremacy in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, the republican explosion under Charles I. and the political guarantees granted to the English church by the House of Brunswick, have produced no other practical result in England, than to secure to her a more abundant circulation of liberal opinions, religious as well as political, than exists

in any other nation of Europe. To use the language of Swift, my Lord Martin has succeeded my Lord Peter, and the perpetual variation of the dissenting sects, which are necessarily divided, forms the only argument of Martin against the objections of Jack.

The King of England is the head of the English church. The bishops acknowledge his supremacy, and he may preach and administer the sacrament. Elizabeth, when she instituted a national faith, preserved many of the ceremonies of the Roman church, together with organs, ornaments, altars, mitres, surplices, &c.; her feminine vanity was gratified by pomp, which is one of the natural attributes of power. The English hierarchy consists of the superior clergy: that is to say, of two archbishops, twenty-two bishops, together with a host of deans, canons, and archdeacons; and the inferior clergy, which is composed of rectors, curates, &c. The annual revenues of these religious functionaries amount to two millions sterling, exclusive of tithes; but, as may naturally be supposed, these spiritual benefits are not more equally distributed than worldly honours and privileges.

Deaneries, prebends, and rich livings, have sometimes been the rewards of learning; but now, as in former times, it is a subject of complaint, that the church has become the patrimony of the younger sons of powerful families. Many good livings are at the disposal of persons of rank and fortune among the laity, and two or three are often conferred on one minister. The English

rectors are severely reproached for what is termed *non-residence*. They accept of several livings, and bargain with a poor curate to perform their duties for them, for a moderate stipend. I say nothing of simony.

The doctrines and the service of the church of England are settled by the liturgy; which is, in many parts, remarkable for eloquence of style. Its imperfection has, however, been acknowledged by more than one holy prelate, in spite of the panical fear of innovation, which is the disease of England in religion, as well as in politics. There is, for example, a contradiction between the prayers which were inserted on account of the gunpowder conspiracy, and those which were composed on the accession of William III. The Armenians and the Calvinists dispute the explanation of several articles of the liturgy; and, in consequence, one of the English Bishops will not admit any minister into his diocese, until he has undergone an examination. When the reformers separated from the communion of the church of Rome, the pretence was the free use of the Bible. The English liturgy is extracted from the Scriptures, as are also most of the prayers contained in the Book of Common Prayer. Every member of the English church is required to place as much faith in the Prayer Book as in the Bible.

The English church, which was founded by the intolerant Henry VIII., long preserved a character of intolerance. Even the almost exploded weapon of excommunication was employed by the English

church long after its separation from the church of Rome. It now occasionally boasts of being the most tolerant of all religions; and so it is as far as the frontiers of Scotland and the Irish sea. Intolerance, it is true, belongs less to the character of the English people, than to the policy of their government. However, the degree of intolerance which really exists in England, is not attributable solely to the clergy, or the ministerial party. The upper ranks of society are, to appearance, every day more closely embracing the doctrines of the church of England, and the consequences of those doctrines are implicitly adopted by that unenlightened portion of the people who, in all countries, devotedly serve the interests of the national church, and see only with the eyes of their preachers. The English church, being the religion of the state, necessarily views dissenters with an eye of jealousy; and the spirit of proselytism, which, in general, animates all sects, joined to the enthusiasm which distinguishes some of the most active, involves the English bishops and ministers in a continual contest. The example of our revolutionary atheism has been a great lesson to them, and places them equally on their guard against liberal ideas. Thus a degree of energy and activity animates all religious doctrines in England, because conflicting interests are continually brought into contact with each other, and are unrestrained by any superior power.

It is generally admitted that a clergy should not be dependent on public charity; but at the same

time, when their worldly interests clash with the interests of their flocks, they must necessarily be degraded in a country where free discussion is permitted, where wealth is jealous of all encroachment on its prerogatives, and where the spirit of trade and industry wages continual war against all kind of spiritual domination.

LETTER XLV.

TO THE SAME.

I ACCOMPANIED my friend, the young clergyman, on a visit to a little village, of which his father is rector. This worthy old man, who is sincere in his faith, and scrupulous in the observance of his duties, wins the hearts of his flock by persuasive good humour. He is fervently attached to the established church; but at the same time he is very tolerant in his principles. While his son and he went to pay a visit to a friend, I took a seat in the library, and amused myself by looking over a book entitled the *Velvet Cushion*. This title at first somewhat puzzled me, and perhaps it may not be perfectly intelligible to you without a little explanation. I must inform you, then, that the pulpits of the English churches are

each furnished with a cushion of velvet, on which the preacher lays his hands when in the attitude of prayer; and the little work to which I have just alluded, purports to be the history of one of these cushions, which, since the reign of Mary, has survived all the vicissitudes of the catholic, protestant, and dissenting faiths, and at length finds a place in the pulpit of a country church. The author of this innocent satire, which is not very remarkable for invention, supposes that, being suddenly endowed with the use of speech, the apostolic cushion becomes its own historian.

This novel piece of autobiography is, at the same time, a gallery of portraits. That of the vicar, to whom it is addressed, presents several traits which I immediately applied to my host. I recognised the tranquil and regular habits which his son had described to me, and of which I was myself a witness on the day which I spent in his house. Every morning the good clergyman reads a chapter of the bible; he then joins in prayer with his old housekeeper, the gardener, and another servant, and gives them his blessing. After dinner, he employs himself in preparing his sermon for the succeeding Sunday, or he visits some of the neighbouring cottages, to administer consolation to the afflicted, to stimulate and encourage piety, and to censure neglect of duty. Unfortunately, his limited income prevents him from indulging the charitable feelings of his heart to any great extent. All his sensual enjoyments consist in a pinch of snuff, a nap after dinner,

and occasionally smoking a pipe. His great source of grief, to which he alludes with truly christian resignation, is, that God was not pleased to suffer his wife to accompany him to the close of his mortal pilgrimage. Sometimes, when he looks out at the window, and perceives, at a little distance from the rectory, the marble tomb, beneath which her ashes repose, a deep sigh escapes him; but he recollects that his son is still with him, and, banishing unavailing regret, he turns towards him and affectionately presses his hand.

I returned to London delighted with my excursion, and fully convinced that the character of the worthy vicar of Wakefield is not yet extinct among the English clergy.

The son of the rector of H——— is more ambitious than his father ever was. He duly appreciates his father's virtues, but he acknowledges that he feels himself destined for a more distinguished career. He occasionally indulges in the dream of Dr. Syntax.

If this young man should ever be made a bishop, he will be indebted for his preferment to the patronage of the friends he has made at Cambridge, where he has formed an intimacy with the sons of some of the principal nobility. He has won the good graces of the present Bishop of London, of whom he entertains a higher opinion than of the venerable Porteus, his predecessor. Bishop Porteus* was one of the most active apostles of the

* During a debate in the House of Lords in the year 1794, some lines were quoted from a poem on war, by Bishop Porteus, in which

English church. He instituted several useful ecclesiastical regulations, and some establishments for the education of the poor. He constantly exerted himself to oppose the corruption of morals, and the alarming progress of new dissenting sects. In his zeal he scrupled not to address remonstrances to princes. To secure the scrupulous observance of the Sabbath, was one of the objects he had most dearly at heart. It was the custom among many of the nobility in London to give concerts on a Sunday evening, and the bishop wrote to several of the principal families, representing the impropriety of this proceeding. The Prince Regent himself was in the habit of meeting a party of friends every Sunday evening, at the house of a lady of rank; but Bishop Porteus obtained from his Royal Highness a promise, that the party should take place on Saturday, instead of Sunday.* This prelate was one of the founders and the president of the famous Society for the Suppression of Vice. In France such an institution would soon sink under the shafts of ridicule. It must be confessed that this voluntary police is

the reverend prelate observes, that a single murder makes a man an assassin, but that a thousand make him a hero. The bishop was present at the time. He was in the constant habit of voting with the ministry. A noble lord asked him whether he was really the author of the excellent lines that had been quoted. "Yes," he replied, "but they were not intended to apply to the present war."

* A nobleman who was accustomed to attend these parties, being in better spirits than usual one Sunday morning, was met by a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, who made free to tell him that he was setting a bad example to his inferiors. The nobleman replied, like the Count Almaviva's gardener: *C'est un petit reste de la veille.*

an exquisite example of moral cant. Even its apologists have been forced to acknowledge its abuses. But thanks to the blessing of practical liberty, which is enjoyed in England, this Areopagus for protecting morality and religion, is not more formidable than was the holy inquisition in Spain, during the reign of Charles III. The English are so fond of declaiming against the poor heirs of Torquemada, and the jesuits of our police, that we may be permitted to laugh a little at the expence of this insular inquisition.

Offences of the press are prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice; and it is, in consequence, the terror of the publishers of blasphemous works. It is, however, to be regretted, that the legislature is frequently incompetent to check the poison which is disseminated by mischievous publications.

LETTER XLVI.

TO THE SAME.

THE ceremonies of the English church are not sufficiently pompous to excite interest, and when a church is filled, all the merit of attracting the congregation rests with the preacher. Happy the minister who has a private chapel to himself, and who collects the money that is paid for the

letting of the seats. A few verses of the psalms are sung during the prayers, and when these are ended, the preacher goes up to the altar, and takes off his surplice, then gravely ascending the pulpit, he delivers his sermon in so cold and uninteresting a manner, that he may thank heaven if he does not put his congregation to sleep. This cold style of declamation is almost universal among the English preachers, who very unceremoniously pronounce our preachers to be nothing but actors. This title was applied to the Rev. Mr. Smith, who fell into the extreme of animated expression in his delivery; and who, when he published some of his sermons, criticised the stiff formality of his brethren.

The principle on which English sermons have been composed, since the reign of Queen Anne, is perfectly in unison with this cold style of declamation. The employment of pompous imagery and poetic ideas in a christian sermon, would, in England, be regarded as profane artifice. An English preacher must explain his sentiments on the subject he treats of, with simplicity and clearness, and without exaggeration. The employment of rhetorical style, would expose an English preacher to the charge of acting a part, and not sincerely feeling the emotions he expresses. In France, pulpit eloquence is more figurative, more pathetic, and more sublime; its defects are emphasis and amplification, and art is not always sufficiently disguised. An English sermon is a series of demonstrations and arguments, a true

moral essay, in which, even evangelical truths are supported on the evidences of human reason. The French priests seek to persuade, but the English ministers are eager to convince. The rules by which English preachers are tied down, are necessarily incompatible with those brilliant fictions, which we style funeral orations. Tillotson's sermons are here still regarded as classic models of pulpit eloquence, because they are less flowery and varied, and more elegant and logical than those of any other English preacher.

There is, occasionally, more warmth, and as much taste in the sermons of Sherlock and Smallridge; as in those of Tillotson; but Atterbury most nearly approaches the academic style of our French preachers. I must needs confess, that all those discourses, which are divided into three distinct heads, appear to me too artificial. Do you remember, my dear Abbé, the Sunday when you produced such an effect on your village flock by a little sermon of my composition, which you were at first inclined to reject, because you thought it too simple, and too much out of the ordinary style. I was obliged to persuade you, that the sermon was merely what my faithful memory enabled me to retain, in consequence of having once copied it out for my late grand uncle, the canon, of whom I ask forgiveness for attributing to him the production of my profane pen.

If, among the pulpit orators of England, I were

to cite only those of the school of Addison and Blair, I should form the same conclusion as Cardinal Maury, who, alluding to the country of Taylor, Hall, Barrow, Pitt, Fox, Burke, &c. says: "Famous islanders, I look for an orator among your ministers of the Gospel, your writers, your members of parliament who are most celebrated in the career of public eloquence; but, without offence to your genius, and, above all, without forgetting your glory, I must needs acknowledge, that I find none worthy of the name!" Blair is of much the same opinion as our cardinal. But we must reject the Addisonian style in religious eloquence—we must disdain the rhetoric which has produced master-pieces in France, and poetic amplifications in the pulpit of Tillotson; we must lose sight of that artificial eloquence, the offspring of the dignified persuasion of the minister who preaches with the glass of *eau sucrée* beside him, and look for inspired eloquence in the history of the conflicts of the reformation, first against catholicism and then against episcopacy, from the first proselytes of Calvin and Luther, to the apostles of methodism. The chronicles of the period, and the author of the *Monastery*, afford an adequate idea of the power which Knox and Warden exercised in Scotland. Latimer was a sort of Brydaine in his popular homilies. Several of the victims of the reign of Queen Mary, pronounced sublime protestations on the burning pile. The tale of *Old Mortality* contains some admirable specimens of presbyterian eloquence.

Those of Kettledrum are ridiculous, absurd, even comic, from their coarse emphasis: but those of Macbriar are singularly animated, vehement, pure, and almost always dignified. This was the age of Milton and the covenanters; and it was, also, the age of Taylor, Hall, and Barrow. These different orators faithfully express the taste of their time; abundance of imagery, fervent enthusiasm, pathos, and erudition, were the qualities which were demanded of them. Hall, who was formidable to Milton, often concealed beneath his ornaments and *concetti*, real vigour of logic and reasoning. Taylor formed Burke, and Barrow formed Pitt. Fox, the rival of Pitt and Burke, rather studied Demosthenes than the orators of his own nation.

Endowed with brilliant fancy, and a rich store of varied information, Bishop Taylor combined with ardent and sincere piety the purest moral principles. Considered as a writer, he may be compared to Fenelon, in all points except good taste. His faults were those of an age, when, in France, as well as in England, the most false ornaments, extravagant quotations, and burlesque plays of words, were lavishly employed in the pulpit.* The taste for *euphuism* had survived the reign of Elizabeth; but, to the bombast and

* The notice on Mascaron, in Dussault's *Choix d'Oraisons Funèbres*, contains the following passage:—

"False and inappropriate ornament, misplaced strokes of wit, affected comparisons, and pedantic allusions were employed in monstrous profusion. Spanish bombast was introduced into the French pulpit along with Italian point. Sermons were made up of fantastic plays of

affectation of the orthodox preachers, the puritans opposed emphatic scriptural allusions, and simple but powerful eloquence, whose energetic persuasiveness produced its effect on the minds of those to whom it was addressed. Taylor and Barrow both supported the doctrines of the established church. Taylor, by clothing his poetic ideas in the liveliest colours, dazzled his hearers by the brilliancy of his varied fancy, or won their hearts by his fervent enthusiasm, which bordered on mysticism. Barrow, who was more precise, more rapid, and more restrained in the expression of his feelings, appealed more directly to the judgment of his auditors.

The English are indebted to Charles II. for the revolution which his return from France produced in the pulpit. That prince, whose rank condemned him to hear a sermon once every week,* resigned his conscience to the precepts of the ministers of the English church, while he required them to observe the rules which his taste

words, pedantic quotations, and bad epigrams. The propounders of the Gospel scrupled not to employ even the language of burlesque.

* One day, when South, the king's chaplain, was preaching a sermon, the whole court fell asleep. South stopped short in his discourse, and three times called out to the Earl of Lauderdale, who suddenly awoke, as did also some of the other courtiers. "Excuse me, my lord," said the preacher, "but you snore so loud, that I fear you will wake his majesty."

A methodist preacher, who had probably read the above anecdote of Dr. South, remarking that some of his congregation had fallen asleep during his sermon, suddenly called out—"Fire! fire!" "Where? where?" exclaimed the faithful, who were roused by this unexpected alarm: "In hell," added the preacher, "for those who sleep while their minister preaches the word of God!"

prescribed. The didactic style was the given form for orthodox sermons, and enthusiasm was left to the Dissenters. Before I speak of puritanical eloquence, I must say a few words on Bishop Taylor.

Those who are acquainted with the vast and irregular genius, the noble conception, and the style, by turns sublime and fantastic, which distinguish the compositions of Taylor, will the more readily understand certain literary opinions adopted by the *lake school* of poets. Milton's prose, which was long neglected, at length suddenly shared the admiration which his sublime poetry universally excites. It is so difficult to separate Milton's opinions from his eloquence, that the lake school, which adopts the ministerial side in politics, has some difficulty in reconciling its admiration of the apostle of regicide with its worship of the prelate who shared the exile of the monarchy.

Coleridge observes, that Milton and Taylor were all their lives in direct opposition to each other, though, in the course of their controversies, they never once mentioned one another by name. Milton commenced his career, by attacking the liturgy and the principles of the English church, and Taylor commenced by defending them. Milton gradually became an austere republican, or rather the advocate of that moral and religious aristocracy, which was in his time called republicanism. Taylor, persuaded that the majority of mankind were unfit for power, became more and

more attached to the prerogatives of royalty. Milton, divesting himself of all respect for the fathers and the councils, looked with contempt on every form of ecclesiastical government, and was guided solely by the light of his own understanding. Taylor, conscious of the insufficiency of the scripture, unaided by tradition and lawful interpretation, approached more nearly to catholicism than any minister of the English church, though Coleridge will not admit this to have been the fact.

LETTER XLVII.

TO MADEMOISELLE TH. F——D.

The foundation of the powerful, two-fold sect of Wesley and Whitfield, the Luther and Calvin of the Methodists, must not be attributed to the influence of their eloquence alone. It is curious to trace, in the history of methodism, the details of an absolute ecclesiastical government, quite as surprising as that of the Jesuits at Paraguay, while it was of course much more difficult to be established in Europe, than among savages. Southey's life of Wesley gives an able and interesting account of the doctrines and institutions of

his sect, which, in less than a century, has been propagated through a large portion of the population of England, North America, the South Sea Islands, &c. forming every where a distinct set of men, with a hierarchy, a religious creed, manners, and literature, peculiar to themselves, and regarding the members of every other sect as profane, or, at least, as but half-christians. The evidently encreasing depravity of society, particularly among the lower classes, called for a reform, and if the methodists may be said to have multiplied the masks of hypocrisy, they must, at the same time, be allowed to have been the means of rescuing numbers from the continually extending influence of demoralization. The new hierarchy of the methodists, and their mode of preaching, multiply the links of connection between pastors and their flocks, and are a sort of indirect return to the *police* of the catholic church. The itinerant preachers of the methodists, their conferences, their right of censure, their confession, and their veneration for the saints of their sect, all bear a strange affinity to catholicism.

In spite of Hogarth's caricatures, and Johnstone's satires,* Wesley and Whitfield are no longer viewed as burlesque preachers, in the history of the variations of protestantism. Whitfield himself informs us, with the bitterest regret, that he was an actor in his youth; he even performed in comedy, with a degree of talent which was

* See the life of Johnstone, by Sir Walter Scott.

afterwards not without its advantage to him in the pulpit. In addition to graceful action, he possessed a regular set of features, and a voice at once powerful and melodious. Southey mentions, that one of his ignorant auditors once characterised his eloquence in an odd, though expressive manner, by saying that Whitfield *preached like a lion.* This strange comparison very well expressed the impassioned vehemence of his oratory, which seized upon the minds of his congregation, and made them tremble like Felix before the apostle.

Whitfield and Wesley preached in the open air, for the chapels were found to be too small to contain the multitudes who flocked to hear them. Franklin, whose authority is unquestionable, calculated geometrically the extent of Whitfield's sonorous voice, and proved that it was sufficiently powerful to be heard by a congregation of twenty thousand people. The Roman amphitheatres would scarcely have held such an assembly. The preacher himself describes the sensations he experienced, on beholding the crowds who assembled to hear him, and who were composed, for the most part, of the colliers from Kingswood, near Bristol. He observes, that he was powerfully affected by their profound silence, and the tears which bathed their blackened countenances.

Whitfield, however, possessed neither the talents, the knowledge, nor the ambitious fervour of Wesley. His sermons are distinguished by no very striking feature. Wesley's eloquence violently agitated those who heard him; he threat-

ened and terrified his auditors, and occasionally threw some of them into fits. There was something singular in his whole appearance; while Whitfield, on the contrary, preserved the usual dress of English clergymen. The wandering life of Wesley is a romance of itself. He had a strong taste for fine landscape scenery, and the spots which he selected for the delivery of his sermons, were often remarkable for a degree of beauty and grandeur, which served to heighten the illusions of his prophetic elocution. In his journal, he himself describes very poetically the effect of the hills and woods, luxuriant vales, and barren, rocky coasts, which alternately formed his temple, or, as Southey says, *his theatre.*

The energetic language in which he occasionally appealed to his audience, while it was addressed to all his hearers collectively, seemed to apply individually to each. Those to whom Massillon addressed his famous apostrophe, in his sermon *on the few elect,* must have returned home overcome with pious sorrow: but it would appear, that Wesley's auditors, instead of returning to their homes, abandoned their relatives and friends, to follow him. I can very well conceive, that his forcible eloquence must have operated with a sort of magnetic power.

The *miracles* of methodism have, no doubt, awakened the vigilance of the clergy of the church of England; but neither the established church, nor any of the dissenting sects, have hitherto produced such powerful preachers as Wesley and

Whitfield. In spite of the exaggerated and declamatory tone, which has become so fashionable in literature, the inhabitants of London remain satisfied with preachers, whose reputation seldom extends beyond the limits of their respective flocks. Lately, indeed, there has risen up one who has made a noise, and who seems likely to fix the public attention for a considerable time. I very much fear, however, that Mr. Irving is calculated only to *make a noise*. He is a presbyterian preacher, who has recently come from Scotland, exclaiming, like Jonas, that Nineveh had offended the Lord. But, preferring a literary to a popular success, the Scottish Jonas addresses himself to the great characters of the day. Statesmen, poets, philosophers, all in their turn, come under the lash of his animadversions, and the Caledonian chapel is alternately a tribunal and an athenæum. Mr. Irving has frequently surprised his hearers, by mingling passages from Shakspeare with quotations from the Bible. The Poet Laureate and Lord Byron have both been summoned before this ecclesiastical tribunal; the one, as a profane flatterer of worldly power, the other as an impious Goliah, against whom the sling of David still kept a stone in reserve. The erotic school of Thomas Moore has been denounced as a sect of worshippers of the Cyprian goddess. Princes of the blood, ministers of state, men of fashion, orators, and authors, crowd together to hear themselves apostrophised by this missionary, who looks very much as if he had escaped, like

Macbriar, from the massacre of Bothwell Bridge. Only imagine the effect of a denunciatory harangue, issuing from the sonorous lungs of a puritanical Sampson (for Mr. Irving is more than six feet high), and accompanied by the threatening action of an arm vigorous enough; like that of the son of Manuel, to shake the columns of the temple. His style of oratory is unequal, and is characterised by sudden bursts of expression. His exaggeration and emphasis appear natural, accompanied, as they are, by physical energy, and the tremendous expression of his countenance. Mr. Irving has produced effect; yet he has gained no proselytes. He is a fashionable preacher, but not an edifying one. He has laid himself open to the censure of the reviews, by mingling profane with sacred literature; and critical analysis has reduced his discourses to incorrect and tedious circumlocutions, sharpened by satire or menace. A few bursts of sublimity occasionally reveal the talent of Irving; but he instantly compromises his dignity by trivial allusions. His enthusiasm partakes of the artifice of a rhetorician; his delivery is that of an actor, rather than a Peter the hermit. He certainly will not form a sect, and he will lose all his popularity, when the temporary astonishment he has excited wears away.

At the same time, it would be no difficult matter to justify Mr. Irving's panegyrists by quotations. A selection of fragments from his discourses would give a high idea of his talent for narrative, description, &c. He might often be advantage-

ously opposed to Bishop Taylor, if it were not forbidden, in the nineteenth century, to combine the defects of Taylor with his beauties.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO M. DUMONT.

THE eloquence of the bar, to which I now wish to call your attention, is connected with so many political questions, that I cannot do better than commence by a few considerations on the English constitution. I propose to devote several of my letters exclusively to the subject of public speaking, and I shall necessarily enter into details respecting the houses of parliament and popular meetings. Sincerely attached as I am to representative government, I shall endeavour not to suffer myself to be blind to the vices of that system, which a philosopher would be inclined to call the least bad, rather than the best. I shall, above all, avoid making a Utopia of the English government, like the host of writers who are justly reproached for having allowed themselves to be seduced by words, before having penetrated into the secret of things.

In England, time has happily consecrated two

invaluable privileges of the people, namely, the liberty of the press (which cannot here be capriciously suppressed by an ordinance,) and individual liberty. There is in England a routine of constitutional manners, if I may so express myself, which we want in France; but it is necessary to be on one's guard against that species of political quackery, which would tend to persuade the English people that they are as happy as they can be, and that they have a right to look upon the inhabitants of the other states of Europe, as mere flocks of slaves. Though our characteristic impatience occasionally incense us against power, we must not suffer our dignity to be insulted by the arrogance of foreigners. However, English writers, ministerial as well as political, occasionally let certain confessions escape them, which are calculated to render us better satisfied with our lot. It is curious to observe how our calumniators in the reviews sometimes refute themselves. I have also met with several candid Englishmen, whose conversation has afforded me an insight into the real state of their country. If the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews should do me the honour to take offence at these remarks, you will help me to prove that my arguments are at least founded on impartial authorities.*

I shall venture to refute a few chapters of the romance which Madame de Staël has attached to the

* The reader will perceive that this letter is merely a fragment. I have thrown into some of my subsequent letters, a few considerations on English patriotism and political reform

sequel of her work on the French revolution; though it will, of course, be difficult to shake the authority of a writer of such distinguished talent. When Madame de Staël set foot on British ground, she thought she was breathing the air of freedom for the first time. She was relieved from the imperial persecutions, of which she had been for ten years the victim. She was a wandering princess, happy to find the barrier of the sea between her and the giant, who, with one stride, could move from Paris to Moscow. Grateful for the first asylum that received her, Corinne suffered herself to be too easily misled by the parade of patriotism and morality, which was set up by the political and religious hypocrites of the three kingdoms. Her brilliant imagination poetically personified England under the form of St. George, mounted on his war horse, for the deliverance of Europe. John Bull paid back this compliment with interest; for he was flattered by the idea of the chivalrous devotedness which our celebrated countrywoman attributed to him, just as a vain shopkeeper might be supposed to listen with complacency to the praises of a lady of rank, who should condescend to tell him he had the air of a gentleman. I am far from wishing to retract the admiration which I have uniformly professed for Madame de Staël, both as a writer and a politician; and in spite of all the extravagant things she has said about Wellington and England, I revere her for having, at least, expressed a hope that France will one day enjoy constitutional liberty. The hopes of genius

often prove to be happy predictions. Madame de Staël has not blasphemed like those who affirm, that public spirit and patriotism exist only in the country which produced Pitt and Fox. People are, of course, suspected when they praise themselves; but I have lately read an article in the Quarterly Review for January 1817, in which it is positively affirmed that the French are infinitely more distinguished for patriotism than the English, and that the latter have really less national spirit than any nation in the world. If we accept only one half of the praise which the writer is pleased to bestow on us, it will be found to be sufficiently flattering.

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LETTER XLIX.

TO M. ALBIN HOSTALIER.

It is important to study, not only the spirit of the English constitution, but also the origin and present application of all the laws which directly relate to individuals and property. Political liberty is not sufficient to constitute the happiness of a nation; there must also be civil equality, that is to say, a code of laws regulating the mutual rights of the citizens, as the constitution establishes the

reciprocal duties of governments and subjects. The laws of England are divided into common law and statute law. The former consists of the laws of custom and tradition, some of which were collected by Alfred and Edward the Confessor, and the latter includes the statutes, or acts of parliament. I should have acquired the knowledge necessary for analyzing some of the principal provisions of the English code, if, indeed, it can be called a code, but that I was afraid to involve myself in the first windings of the immense labyrinth. The knowledge of English law may be compared to the knowledge of the Chinese language, with which the mandarins themselves are never perfectly acquainted. While looking over Blackstone's Commentaries, in order to obtain an idea of the hierarchy of the magistracy and its prerogatives, the rights of persons and things, crimes and punishments, civil courts, criminal courts, &c., I involuntarily turned to Blackstone's poetry, for that celebrated judge was a lover of the muses, and he bade them a poetic adieu when he set foot on the threshold of the temple of chicanery. In the system of English legislature, there is a principle of democracy, which may be traced back to the primitive laws of the gothic nations. The trial by jury, in which Britain so highly prides herself, is found in the judicial ordeals of the Visigoths of Spain, a fact which is explained by the common origin of the conquerors of the peninsula and England. But the democratic principle is everywhere neutralized by the numerous

guarantees given to the aristocratic elements, and to property. The aristocracy of the house of lords is not only represented by its family connections in the lower house, but it is supported by all the lawyers who have seats in the house of commons, and who, from motives of interest, and habits of routine, are hostile to any innovation which would overthrow the usages and customs of the political and judicial legislation. M. Cottu's work on the administration of criminal justice in England, is full of curious information on this head, because the hints which the author received from the whig lawyers of the day, betray the secret of a tacit connection between the aristocracy and the bar.

Coke and Littleton left behind them learned commentaries on the laws of England; but Blackstone's Commentaries, which appeared subsequently, have the advantage of being real elements of jurisprudence, and presenting materials for a complete course of study. Without rising to the height of the views of Montesquieu, he goes back to the general principles of society, and discusses with clearness their positive interpretation and successive applications. Though his style has not the precision of the author of the *Esprit des Lois*, it is often energetic. Blackstone wisely renounced the pedantry of the old lawyers, and did not disdain a poetic metaphor when it served to enliven an argument. Thus, when treating of legal reparations, he compares the whole system to an

old gothic castle of the feudal ages, converted into a modern residence.

But the Collection of State Trials is a most valuable work to those who wish to study English legislature. There the origin of almost all the laws are explained; because in historical trials of general and permanent interest, an infinite number of incidents have naturally been attached to the principal cause, and have shared its importance. The state trials are likewise the annals of English eloquence, from the time of Henry II. to the present day. They furnish the historian with materials for studying the spirit of every age; while at the same time they are an inexorable register of injustice and error, well calculated to humble the pride of both kings and subjects. It appears that a statute of Edward III. abolished the exclusive use of the Latin tongue in legal proceedings: but Latin was not entirely banished from the courts of law until the reign of George II. The reformation was so exclusively religious, that its leaders merely insisted on having the bible translated into the vulgar tongue, through distrust of the priests, while the worldly interests of the community were consigned to the honesty of lawyers. Joined to the barbarous forms of legal proceedings, law Latin may be justly compared to the Egyptian hieroglyphics; and even when translated into the vernacular tongue, it is to me an unknown language. I frankly confess that I am not one of the initiated; and this will help to account for the

inaccuracies which may be found in my letters which treat of legislation and the bar. Bentham's theories are to me more interesting than those of Blackstone. I will, however, try to give you a few brief sketches of the most celebrated English barristers.

LETTER LI.

TO M. ST. CLAIR.

If ever I should send you any observations on my respectable brethren the English physicians, I must in conscience warn you that, perhaps in spite of myself, a certain degree of partiality will creep into the praises I shall be inclined to bestow on them. I have just been glancing over M. Cottu's interesting work on the administration of criminal justice in England; and I am convinced that it is very difficult to avoid being influenced by that *esprit de corps* which closely unites the members of the same profession, even though they belong to different nations. This fraternity, this free-masonry, certainly exists in greater force among lawyers than among physicians. M. Cottu devotes a whole chapter to the panegyric of the legal professors of London, whom he praises as seriously as a monk would praise his own convent. They are men of unparalleled probity, learning, delicacy, and amiability. He does not even in-

dulge in the least joke about their huge wigs, their bags, their awkward gestures, or the monotonous and nasal tone of their delivery. M. Cottu has only forgotten to mention their written eloquence. Yet this perhaps is the only thing for which they deserve praise, thanks to some celebrated names among them. It is certainly the only point on which my impartiality permits me to compliment them with sincerity. Erskine, Mackintosh, Romilly, Curran, Scarlett, Brougham, Denman, Williams, &c. &c. are names which belong to literature. To a novice like me, the eloquence of a pleading seems all a mere fiction.

Though my friend Henry B—— somewhat resembles the Templar of the Spectator, who was more fond of the theatre than the study of jurisprudence, yet I naturally addressed myself to him, in order to get introduced to the schools of laws, and to hear the principal legal professors. But what was my surprise on being informed that these schools existed only by name! Of what use are the inns of court? Who guides the young candidates through the mazy labyrinth of English law? How do they get admitted to the bar? Why do they not study at Oxford or Cambridge? In short, I asked all the questions which I doubt not you are just preparing to address to me. I shall give you the answers which I myself received; but in a very concise form, as I shall necessarily return to this subject when I visit the universities.

Every member of the English bar belongs to one of the inns of court. Instead of being obliged

to attend courses of lectures, and to undergo examinations, the students are merely required to appear at the inns to which they belong five times during every term; and above all, to contribute with their purses and appetites to sixty dinners in the course of the year. These gastronomic regulations would appear strange enough to that portion of our studious youth who regale themselves with a dinner at Very's, or the Frères Provincaux; once during their three years' labour.

After attending these legal feasts, or paying a fine of eighteen shillings for every time he is absent, the student is called to the bar on the proposition of the society. He has to pass through a general examination, and the majority of a single vote may occasion his rejection. The celebrated Horne Tooke underwent this humiliation. The majority has also the right of expelling any member who may behave improperly, or assigning him a place at a particular table during the dinners. The police of the inns belongs to the benchers. The barristers are next in dignity to the benchers; and next to the barristers are the students. In former times the English lawyers constantly wore their professional costume. It may be presumed that they once devoted too much attention to dress; for Elizabeth passed sumptuary laws, prohibiting them from wearing long hair, large ruffs, cloaks, boots and spurs. The length of their beards too was determined by legal regulations; but on this point fashion always had the ascendancy; and the lawyers always wore their beards long or short,

just as they thought fit. They have, however, faithfully adhered to the enormous wig of Louis XIV.'s reign, which the members of our academy ought to be condemned to wear.*

It is very easy to go through the form of a course of legal study in London; but young men who wish to rise to eminence usually place themselves in a special pleader's office, where they have the advantage of gaining both information and experience. But for this a considerable sum of money must be annually paid. Thus none but the sons of persons of some fortune can hope to distinguish themselves in a profession, the preparations for which are so expensive.

The principal inns in London, are the Inner and Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn. The Inns of Chancery were formerly preparatory schools, but are now chiefly occupied by attornies.

The Temple, which is divided into two inns, formerly belonged to the Templar Knights; but on the extinction of that order, it was purchased by the professors of the law. Since all that now remains of the ancient usages of the school are li-

* At the Lancaster assizes, in the summer of 1819, Mr Scarlett having in a hurry entered the court without his wig and gown, apologized for the informality, but at the same time expressed a hope that the time would soon arrive when these *mummeries* would be entirely abolished. On the following day, in consequence of this *hope*, which gave a contradiction to Beaumarchais' Bredoison, all the lawyers appeared in court without their professional costume. However, this innovation lasted but a day; and next morning Bredoison was proved to be right.

bations and dinners, one cannot be surprised that the popular proverb, *to drink like a Templar*, should be preserved in England. The principal entrance to the Temple is adorned with the sculptured figure of a lamb, which, Henry B—— informed me, was the emblem of the society. If I had not been afraid of venturing on a worn out jest, I should have asked him where the wolf was, to complete the allegory. Whether the *sign* applies to the judge, the counsel, or the client, I do not pretend to say, but I would wager that it provoked a smile, even from M. Cottu.

The Inner Temple, which is agreeably situated near the Thames, has an elegant garden on the banks of the river. The hall is adorned with the venerable portraits of Coke and Littleton. The portrait of Judge Jefferies, of atrocious memory, formerly occupied a place in the hall; but about the end of the seventeenth century, the members of the inn determined to remove it. They at first proposed that it should be burnt; but it was finally resolved to present it to his family. This protestation of posterity against an iniquitous judge, is a lesson to the instruments of the vengeance of kings. The abdication of James II. is also a warning to kings who employ such judges.

The hall of the Middle Temple is only remarkable for a few portraits of kings and queens, among which is one of Charles I. by Vandyke.

Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn, do not demand any particular notice, for they are subject to the

same regulations as the Temple. Lincoln's Inn preserves, among its annals, as a title of distinction, the account of a banquet at which Charles II. was present, with all his court. After dinner, his majesty desired that the register of admission should be brought to him and he inscribed his own name on it. The courtiers eagerly imitated the example of the monarch; they even borrowed students' gowns, and for the remainder of the day, gravely addressed each other as doctors of law. Next day, four deputies from Lincoln's Inn proceeded to Whitehall, to return thanks to his majesty, who, in token of his satisfaction, permitted them to kiss his hand. The Emperor Alexander, the King of Prussia, and the Cossack Hetmann Platow, when they visited England, a few years ago, received degrees at Oxford.

Instead of attending courses of lectures and examinations, the law students form among themselves oratorical societies, in which they practice the art of public speaking. Henry B—— took me with him to one of these meetings, which reminded me of the little academies of my medical studies, where every one maintained his theory *unguibus et rostris.*

The celebrated Curran gives an account of the first attempts at oratory which he made at these meetings of law students. He who afterwards excelled in extempore delivery, and who was so remarkable for the boldness of his replies to judges, was unable to utter a word the first time he attempted to speak in an assembly of young men of

his own age. His friends in vain vociferated *hear him! hear him!* There was nothing to be heard. He observes that his lips moved, but that he was in the condition of the unfortunate fiddler at a fair, who, just when he was about to commence a solo, which he expected would enrapture his hearers, discovered that an envious rival had maliciously rubbed some soap on his bow. Curran, however, persevered in attending these meetings; and he at length became the member of a society known by the name of the *Temple Devils*. One evening he attended a meeting of this society, in company with two of his friends, after having dined rather more sumptuously than usual, in consequence of having on the preceding evening received a trifling remittance of money from his friends in Ireland. He had even indulged in a libation of punch to drink the health of his mother, who never forgot the poor student. When Curran and his friends arrived at the meeting, they found one of the members ranting unmercifully, and committing all sorts of blunders in history and chronology. Curran could not refrain from testifying his contempt and astonishment. He observes that he was probably inspired by his respect for the sacred names which he heard profaned, or by the effect of the bowl of punch, of which he and his friends had been partaking: but be this as it may, there was an air of confidence and defiance in his countenance when his eyes met those of the speaker. The latter, who was, perhaps, glad of an opportunity of cutting short his harangue, turning to Curran, addressed him

by the title of the *mute orator*, and in a strain of bitter raillery challenged him to prove his talent in any other way than in *silent eloquence*. Curran boldly stood forward, and answered his assailant with such warmth and cutting irony, that his reputation took its date from that very day.

If an independent bar be a guarantee for the liberty of a nation, the only form of government with which liberty is compatible in Europe, namely, the representative form, is most favourable to the eloquence of the bar.

In England, true forensic eloquence may be said to take its date from the speeches of Lord Erskine; and yet the members of the legal profession have enjoyed importance for a longer period here than in France. Success at the bar in England leads to the first dignities of the state, to the ministry, and even to the peerage. Hume, however, despaired of seeing a man of genius rise up to correct the cold and faulty style of delivery, prevalent among his countrymen. That classical critic, Dr. Blair, who judged his contemporaries with severity, seemed to regard eloquence at the English bar as an impossibility.* Madame de

* The English, who are fond of persuading themselves that the reign of Elizabeth was rich in glory of every kind, affirm that England never possessed so many clever lawyers as while that queen occupied the throne. If we may judge from the most celebrated of them all, Sir Edward Coke, the lawyers of that period certainly did not pique themselves much in the graces of the profession. Sir Edward seems to have been the inexorable agent of a tyrannical inquisition. In a speech which he made on the trial of the Earl of Essex, he concluded by saying, "that man hoped to be Robert the first on the throne, but by

Staël did not know Erskine, Mackintosh, Curran, &c. when she wrote her work on *Literature*. She has retracted her opinion of British eloquence in her posthumous work. If the orators whom I have just mentioned had written nothing, I could never have formed any idea of their admirable talent from hearing the speeches of their contemporaries. I certainly make an exception in favour of Messrs. Brougham and Scarlett; but in general it is difficult to avoid applying to the English barristers of the present day, what the Spectator says of the lawyers of his time.

The rules of composition which the English barristers are required to observe, necessarily operates against the production of those energetic discourses, of which graceful or dignified action is the natural concomitant. In an English pleading all must be positive. Even in criminal cases, if the speaker depart too far from the simple discussion of the point under consideration, the judge has a

the righteous judgment of God, he will be Robert the last in his earldom."

Coke, who was attorney-general at the time of the infamous trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, insulted the prisoner by all sorts of gross and absurd appellations. He called him a serpent, with an English face and a Spanish heart; a reptile, sprung from the offscourings of the earth, &c. Sir Walter at length became irritated, and interrupted him by observing that he spoke with unbecoming barbarity. The attorney-general then said, that he could not find words to characterize such infamous treason; to which Sir Walter replied, that he indeed seemed to be at a loss for words, since he had used the same expressions several times over.

Coke's speeches are remarkable for a certain degree of conciseness, but an exuberance of ill-placed erudition, destroys the effect of some of his best discourses.

right to interrupt him, and to warn the jury not to be misled by any pathetic appeals to their sensibility. Lord Erskine's masterpieces are those speeches in which rules have not been observed.

The English code, which combines an inextricable mixture of the barbarous laws of the Saxons with the quirks of the Norman law, continually affords opportunities for sophistry and delay. Wealthy families frequently educate their younger sons for the bar. It is calculated that there are in London upwards of ten thousand legal practitioners, including barristers, solicitors, attorneys, &c. This is a scourge which Moses would have sent to the Egyptians, had he thought fit to visit them with another infliction.

The independence of the English bar has frequently been a subject of remark. But this independence did not always exist. In the reign of Henry VI. a trial on a question of precedence took place between the earl of Warwick and the Earl Marshal. Sir Walter Beauchamp, who was the first barrister dignified by the title of *Sir*, was counsel for the earl of Warwick ; but in spite of his title he was not less servile than his learned brother Mr. Rojer Blount, in his protestations of respect for the high rank of the earl. Each of the lawyers entreated the nobleman against whom they were about to plead, to pardon all they might be obliged to say in favour of their respective clients. Hume mentions, that, at a more recent period, no barrister would venture to sign Prynn's memorial against the prelates, &c.

Adieu. If you ever attain to the dignity of a judge's gown, I hope your clients will have cause to exclaim with Shylock—

> "O noble judge; O excellent young man!
> ..... O wise and upright judge!
> How much more elder art thou than thy looks!"

P. S. If you wish to form an accurate idea of the life of an English law-student, a barrister, or a judge, I would recommend you to read the life of Horne Tooke, who was refused admittance to the bar, under the pretence of his being in holy orders, but really on account of his political opinions. That celebrated man studied in one of the inns of court, with Dunning and Lord Kenyon, both of whom rose to eminence at the law. When Horne Tooke was tried for high treason, Dunning was his counsel, and Lord Kenyon his judge.

The life of Lord Guilford, Herbert's History of the Inns, and other works, present many curious details, which I shall probably notice after I have visited Scotland and the English universities. I shall also take another opportunity of speaking of the present Lord Chancellor, whose profound legal knowledge is proverbial. I am inclined to compare him with Mr. Bentham, who is rather a European than an English legislator. Lord Eldon has attained his present eminence solely by his own talent and exertions.

LETTER LI.

TO M. F. BLAIN, HONORARY PRESIDENT AT ARLES.

Critics have divided the forensic eloquence of the three kingdoms into three different styles. 1st. The English style, properly so called, which is simple, devoid of ornament, and reduced to the dry discussion of facts. 2d. The Irish style, which is florid, pathetic, and enthusiastic. And, 3d. The Scotch style, which partakes somewhat of both the others. This latter style, therefore, in which Lord Erskine's speeches are pre-eminently distinguished, may be regarded as the type of perfection; and it is very generally adopted by the English barristers. I shall accordingly divide the eloquence of the British bar into two schools only: that of the English or Scottish taste, whichever it may be called, and the Irish school. The pretended London school presents no example of eloquence worthy to be distinguished in a literary point of view. Its laconism may be accounted for by the few courts of judicature in the English capital, compared with its population and the multiplicity of causes which constantly engage attention. The counsellor who pleads is obliged to count his minutes, to proceed directly to the object he has in view, and to adhere strictly to the employment of technical terms. He pleads ten causes to-day, in order that he may be

enabled, if possible, to plead twenty to-morrow. Lord Erskine, and those who have adopted his lordship as a model, have taken time to be eloquent by judgment and imagination combined. We have reason to congratulate ourselves on the publication of the *Chefs d'œuvre du Burreau Français.* Nothing short of that valuable collection would have enabled us to reply to the English, when they ask us where are our Erskines, and our Mackintoshes? That national monument enables us to oppose illustrious rivals to the great legal orators of England; but none, it must be confessed, can, like Lord Erskine, boast of twenty masterpieces.

"I cannot," says Madame de Staël, "too highly recommend the collection of the forensic speeches of Lord Erskine, the most eloquent and ingenious lawyer in England."* Indeed no work is better calculated to afford a correct idea of the trial by jury, the liberty of the press, and the system of criminal prosecution in England, the admirable principles of which form a gratifying contrast to the English penal code, which is, in many instances, absurd, and even atrocious.

Mutilated quotations would afford no idea of the majestic eloquence of Lord Erskine, particularly as the printed text of his speeches is, of course, destitute of that power of voice and action which gave them two-fold magic in the delivery.

> "Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
> More learned than their ears————"

* *Considerations on the French Revolution.*

The printed speeches of Lord Erskine are like the scenes of Shakspeare without the acting of Macready; or, I may more properly say, like the tragedies of Racine, without the performance of Talma; for Erskine, who was dramatic in cases which powerfully interested the feelings, was regularly dignified, and is a model of chaste and temperate eloquence. Yet it must be acknowledged that the speeches of Lord Erskine are the elaborate and finished productions of fine talent, rather than the original and spontaneous emanations of genius. No speaker ever evinced such ingenuity in throwing an air of novelty over the common places of eloquence, and adapting them appropriately to his subjects. Erskine's speeches are remarkable for elegance, wit, happy classic allusions, and all the graces of language; but, in general, they betray but little profoundness, and rarely exhibit any bold flights of thought or style. His imagination, like his courage, was always subservient to forms. His digressions were not the result of that enthusiasm which may sometimes lead a speaker from his subject, when excited by a novel or poetic idea. He merely seemed to wish momentarily to divert the attention of the judges, in order to bring them upon ground more favourable to his arguments. In a word, Erskine is a superior advocate in his own sphere, and only a common orator out of it. He at least was not very successful in parliament, where questions of paramount interest demand something more than mere legal talent.

Thomas Erskine, third son of the Earl of Buchan, was born in Scotland about the year 1750. After having commenced his education at Edinburgh, and completed it at the university of St. Andrew's, he served for some time in the navy,* and then in the army. But feeling that he was destined for a different vocation, he entered himself a student at Lincoln's Inn, and in 1778 was called to the bar, where he speedily rose to the highest eminence. Erskine was appointed attorney-general to the Prince of Wales, was raised to the peerage, and made Lord Chancellor during Fox's administration, yet he never sacrificed his independence to power, and was, throughout his long life, the brightest ornament of the opposition party.

To his speech in defence of the Dean of Saint Asaph, the English people were indebted for the triumph of reason and liberty over the false interpretation of the law of libel, which was attempted on the part of the government. The question was, whether the jury had the right of deciding on the intention and the fact, or whether it was proper to leave to the judges the privilege of pronouncing on the secret thoughts of the accused. This cause, in which the liberty of the press was also involved, was treated by Lord

* Lord Erskine's service in the navy occasioned him to be preferred to Messrs. Dunning and Lee, as counsel for Admiral Keppel. For this cause he received the sum of 1000 guineas.

Erskine with all the details which the importance of the question demanded; and when Fox made it the grounds of a bill in the house of commons, he supported his arguments on those adduced by Lord Erskine. Fox's bill was, indeed, merely a new exposition of the principles which Erskine's speech presented under a more dramatic form. I shall advert to the successive debates which took place on this memorable question, in favour of the independence of juries, after I have attended the York assizes, where, thanks to a letter of introduction to one of the barristers on the circuit, I hope to collect some valuable information respecting law proceedings.

The alarming doctrines which were broached respecting the law of high treason, found in Lord Erskine an irresistible adversary, both in the trial of Lord George Gordon, and in the case of Hatfield, who fired a pistol at the late king.

In the year 1780, the English government and the house of commons began to manifest more tolerance than had previously been evinced towards the catholics. Lord George Gordon succeeded in communicating his fanaticism to the people of London, and a petition, signed by forty-four thousand protestants, was presented to parliament, praying for the repeal of the measures of indulgence adopted in favour of the catholics. For the space of a week, riotous mobs assembled in the streets of London, setting fire to several of the houses, catholic chapels, &c. The prisoners of Newgate were liberated by the rioters, whom

they joined, and all furiously proceeded to the house of commons, which was then sitting. The insurgents were, however, dispersed by the military.

Erskine's defence of the titled leader of the fanatics is less remarkable for any brilliant effects of style, or sublime bursts of feeling, than for the skilful structure of the whole; but it is, nevertheless, highly impressive, on account of its calm tone of argument and chastity of diction. One is struck by the contrast of that unexpected and violent apostrophe, when the speaker having urged all that was calculated to exculpate Lord George, indignantly exclaimed:—"I say, by God, that man is a ruffian, who shall, after this, presume to build upon such honest, artless conduct as an evidence of guilt." The sensation caused by these words, joined to the voice, the look and the action of the speaker, was, it is said, perfectly electrical. Bold sallies of this kind are inspired by the instinct of the moment, and the sympathy which exists between the speaker and his auditors. The skilful observer, by a single glance, interprets the mute language of the countenance, and understands how far he is master of the feelings of those whom he is addressing.

Madame de Staël has quoted the exordium of the defence of Hatfield, as a striking example of the respect which a constitutional sovereign evinces for the law, even when its forms protect the perpetrator of an attempt against his life. One can-

not, indeed, but admire that excellent principle of a government which, in no case, permits an accused person to be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of his natural judges, and which surrounds him by a safeguard, the more powerful when the nature of the offence with which he is charged is calculated to create him enemies. In proportion as practical liberty has been consolidated in England, the famous Star Chamber has been abolished, extraordinary commissions have become more rare, and individual guarantees have been multiplied against the charge of high treason, which power may so easily attach to all who are obnoxious to its agents. Democracy is, perhaps, not so well represented in the house of commons as in the institution of the jury, which was called by Lord Erskine, the *commons of the judicial order*. The men who are thus temporarily invested with the power of consigning a fellow-creature to death, have, as Fox observed, a natural sympathy with the habits of his life.

In his speech in defence of Hatfield, Lord Erskine observed, that the case, considered in all its circumstances, placed the English government and the English people in the very highest rank in the social order. An attempt, he said, had been made to assassinate the king in the heart of the capital, in a public theatre, and amidst the applause of his faithful subjects; yet, not a hair of the presumed assassin's head was harmed! The least sign of emotion, he added, on the part of the king, would have produced a very different

scene; but his majesty preserved his calmness and dignity, and the offender was taken into custody without insult or reproach.

Madame de Staël, in her commentaries on Lord Erskine's speech, certainly endeavours to elevate the dignity of England at the expense of other nations. "In such a scene as this," she says, "a multitude, ignorant of the virtues of liberty, would have loudly demanded the punishment of the assassin; and courtiers would have shewn themselves as furious as the populace, under the pretence that excess of attachment deprived them of self-possession. But nothing of the kind could possibly take place in a free country. The magistrate king was the protector of his assassin, and no Englishman could conceive the idea of pleasing his sovereign at the expense of the immutable law which represents the will of God on earth."

To understand the issue of this remarkable trial, it is necessary to follow Lord Erskine in the developement of his ingenious theory on mental alienation. Never was the question of forensic medicine so skilfully investigated.

Erskine founded his arguments on the difficult application of the definition of complete or partial insanity. In a civil case the law takes no cognizance of the act of a man who is proved to be insane, though the act in question may have no reference to the particular impulse of his disease. But in criminal cases it is always necessary to prove some connection between the act and the

hallucination with which the accused person is afflicted.

Lord Erskine proved that the prisoner was not only a fanatic, but that he was under the immediate influence of insanity. Hatfield had been wounded when in the army, and he had ever since been subject to periodical fits of madness. He fancied that he was predestined to save the world by suffering a violent death; but his death was not to be produced by the crime of suicide. Lord Kenyon, before whom the case was tried, at first appeared to be very unfavourably disposed towards the prisoner; but Erskine so ably established the principle on which he rested his defence, that the judge changed his tone, and the jury pronounced a verdict of acquittal.

Hatfield was the third regicide who attempted to assassinate George III. The two others were also acquitted.

Lord Erskine's eloquence shines most conspicuously in his speech in defence of Stockdale.

After the house of commons had ordered the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Mr. Stockdale, a London bookseller, published a pamphlet, the author of which, while he declared himself the defender of the Verres of India, made use of some expressions offensive to the house of commons. Upon the motion of Mr. Fox, then one of the managers of the impeachment, the house unanimously voted an address to the king, praying his majesty to direct the attorney-general to file

an information against Mr. Stockdale, as the publisher of a libel upon the commons house of parliament. Mr. Stockdale was tried in the court of king's bench, the fact of the publication was admitted, and Mr. Erskine, as counsel for the defendant, made a speech which is acknowledged to have been the best he ever delivered. English lawyers regard it as a perfect model of the art of addressing a jury, and, considered in a literary point of view, it in many instances presents all that constitutes the poetry of eloquence.

Erskine commenced by drawing an animated picture of the important proceedings which were then taking place in Westminster Hall, which rivetted public interest on Warren Hastings and his defender. He represented his client as overwhelmed by the weight of the resentment of the legislature, and oppressed by the very forms of so solemn a trial; while he insinuated that the author of the pamphlet had merely stepped forward in the defence of misfortune, and that, in a conflict so unequal, an English jury would surely excuse a few imprudent words escaping from a man who had undertaken so generous, and almost desperate, a defence.

After proving the sincerity and impartiality of the writer, with respect to the intention of his work, Lord Erskine, while he avoided defending or justifying Mr. Hastings, nevertheless pointed out the possibility of such justification or defence, in order to free his client from the imputation of having made his book merely a cloak for attacking

the house of commons. This was a delicate point. The advocate could not, without running counter to public opinion, palliate the conduct of the pro-consul of India, against whom the eloquent voice of Sheridan had pronounced a condemnation. It was necessary to avoid associating the author of the libel with the object of public indignation; and it was not without numerous oratorical precautions that Lord Erskine ventured to express his surprise that no witnesses had been brought forward to support the terrible charges against Warren Hastings.

He then came back more directly to his subject, and entered into some details on the nature of the work which it was his task to defend. Feeling that it was important to his cause to extenuate the conduct of Hastings, he endeavoured to shew that most of the atrocities imputed to that viceroy might be attributed to the instructions he had received, to the position in which he was placed, to the perfidious policy of England, and to the iniquity of civilized nations, who employ their intellectual superiority as the means of exercising a tyrannical dominion over less enlightened people. Describing an incident which he himself had witnessed during his travels in America, Erskine put into the mouth of a savage one of those sublime lessons, which cannot be too often repeated to the ambitious.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I can observe that you are touched with this way of considering the subject; and I can account for it. I have not

been considering it through the cold medium of books, but have been speaking of man and his nature, and of human dominion, from what I have seen of them myself amongst reluctant nations submitting to our authority. I know what they feel, and how such feelings can alone be repressed. I have heard them in my youth from a naked savage, in the indignant character of a prince, surrounded by his subjects, addressing the governor of a British colony, holding a bundle of sticks in his hand, as the notes of his unlettered eloquence. 'Who is it,' said the jealous ruler over the desert, encroached upon by the restless foot of English adventure—'who is it that causes this river to rise in the high mountains, and to empty itself into the ocean? Who is that causes to blow the loud winds of winter, and that calms them again in summer? Who is it that rears up the shade of those lofty forests, and blasts them with the quick lightning at his pleasure? The same Being who gave to you a country on the other side of the waters, and gave ours to us; and by this title we will defend it,' said the warrior, throwing down his tomahawk upon the ground, and raising the war-sound of his nation. These are the feelings of subjugated men all round the globe; and depend upon it nothing but fear will controul where it is vain to look for affection."

What is, perhaps, most remarkable in this brilliant address is, that the imagination of the speaker is always subordinate to the interests of the cause he is defending. I will quote one more passage,

in which the genius of the orator is happily combined with the logic of the advocate:—"If," said Lord Erskine, "you are firmly persuaded of the singleness and purity of the author's intentions, you are not bound to subject him to infamy, because, in the zealous career of a just and animated composition, he happens to have tripped his pen into an intemperate expression in one or two instances of a long work. If this severe duty were binding on your consciences, the liberty of the press would be an empty sound, and no man could venture to write on any subject, however pure his purpose, without an attorney at one elbow and a counsel at the other." This is pretty nearly the situation to which our journalists are reduced, thanks to the law of tendency!

In the peroration of his excellent speech in defence of Stockdale, Lord Erskine successfully rivaled the talent of Burke, Fox, and Sheridan. By grounding his arguments on the principles of Christian charity, he appealed to the hearts of his judges with the eloquence of a divine rather than of a lawyer.

But in my admiration of this distinguished man, I must not forget to notice some other eminent members of the English bar.

Dunning, who flourished before Lord Erskine, was raised to the peerage under the title of Lord Ashburton, and died in the year 1783. He was celebrated for wit and gaiety, and for readiness of expression, though he laboured under the disadvantage of a very sensible imperfection in his

speech. Lord Thurlow, too, by his talent and eloquence, rose to the highest dignities.

One of the predecessors of Lord Erskine, who, like him, was a native of Scotland, would furnish materials for a parallel, after the manner of Plutarch. I allude to Counsellor Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, who, in the defence of monarchical principles, manifested integrity and talent equal to Lord Erskine.

Lord Mansfield, who was the opponent of Wilkes, the liberty of the press, and popular liberty, has left behind him as high a reputation as that which Erskine acquired in the defence of public freedom. But Lord Mansfield was a sincere champion of the cause which he espoused, and not a mere ministerial intriguer; he fancied he was defending the people against themselves, and opposing, not liberty, but licentiousness. Of this his toleration for the catholics is a sufficient proof. During the riots of 1780, his house was burnt, and this circumstance furnished him with an allusion, which forcibly indicates his praiseworthy moderation of temper. During the discussion of a legal question in parliament, he said, "I do not speak from books—for I have none left."

LETTER LII.

TO Mr MIGNET.

Sir James Mackintosh, one of the principal opposition members of the house of commons, has attained great eminence at the bar. The foundation of his reputation and fortune was laid by a speech which drew towards him the attention of the English ministry, to whom, however, it is said he had already made some concessions of principle. Sir James was born in the north of Scotland, and was educated at the university of Aberdeen, where he at first applied himself to the study of medicine, and obtained the degree of Doctor. It was not until after the death of his father that he turned his attention to politics and the bar. He entered as a student at Lincoln's Inn about the commencement of the French revolution, and he became acquainted with Godwin and other partizans of republican principles. When Burke published his chivalrous and prophetic protestation against French democracy, Sir James Mackintosh replied to it with the enthusiasm of an adept, and his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, a profound and vigorous work, procured for him the title of *French citizen*. But a man of shrewd understanding, like Sir James Mackintosh, could not long continue to be misled by the sophisms

of anarchy, and he so wisely modified his republicanism, that his more obstinate friends accused him of apostacy. His discourses on natural law and the law of nations, and his lectures on English jurisprudence, seem to be dictated solely by reason.

It is said that Burke's eloquence had the merit of this conversion, which was the last conquest gained by the chivalrous orator over the revolutionary party. The *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* proved to Burke that he had a formidable antagonist in the person of its author. He spoke of the publication in terms of praise; and Mackintosh, who was some time after employed in preparing for the Monthly Review an analysis of the work entitled *The Regicide Peace*, manifested in his criticism all the respect due to the superior genius of the writer. Burke expressed a wish to become personally acquainted with the young whig lawyer, who on his part felt honoured at the idea of such an introduction. At length they met, and it is said engaged in a series of arguments, which were kept up for the space of three days. Poetry triumphed over logic, and the author of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* made ample concessions to the eloquent opponent of republican ideas.

During the peace of Amiens, Sir James Mackintosh, in the exposition of his principles, approximated still more clearly to the theory of *political legitimacies*.

The French revolution was almost exhausted by

its own fury. The men who had for some time succeeded each other in power, were too base or too insignificant to found a solid government. When Buonaparte appeared, preceded by his brilliant reputation, and promising to regenerate the glory of France, he easily deceived people of every party, who, all alike, felt the want of a man capable of annihilating the past and ensuring the future. The republicans still perceived the red cap under the laurels of the general, while the royalists were induced to believe that those laurels served to conceal the cockade of Monk. But when he was seen gradually employing to his own advantage the military force, the laws of the reign of terror, and, with the throne, restoring the abuses of the old monarchy, there were not wanting in all parties some generous minds, who regretted having sacrificed to the selfishness of a tyrant the fidelity of their old affections, or their hopes of liberty. When all the monarchs of Europe acknowledged the upstart sovereign as their brother, some voices were courageously raised against the two-fold usurpation of the rights of the people and the rights of the lawful dynasty. Not content with incarcerating in French dungeons men who were bold enough to denounce his despotism, the future emperor visited them with punishment even in foreign countries. In short, the liberty of the English press was attacked in English courts of law by the Consul of a republic; and had the peace of Amiens been prolonged for a few years, the

emperor would no doubt have required that the journals of our rivals, like our own, should be subject to the controul of his censors.

Among various poetic denunciations against the First Consul, the *Napoléone* of Charles Nodier particularly excited attention. Instead of suspecting this ode to be the production of a young man of twenty, the police, who unfortunately were already judges of poetry, attributed it to several individuals highly distinguished in literature. But the real author did not suffer Cheniar, Lebrun, or Ginguené to be unjustly accused; and his avowal of the production cost him four years of captivity and persecution.

It was an imitation of the *Napoléone*, or rather the same idea represented in a meaner form, that Peltier inserted in his *Journal de Londres*. Charles Nodier's poem was intended to serve as a rallying hymn to the respectable men of both parties, who were alike inspired by hatred of Buonaparte, and whom Pichegru was to assemble under the banner of a constitutional prince of the house of Bourbon.

The *Napoléone* published by Peltier, had a more decided tone of republicanism. The threat of the poignard was unreservedly expressed, and accordingly the agent of the French government declared it to be an excitement to assassination. Mr. Peltier required all the eloquence of his able advocate; and Mackintosh felt a due conviction of the importance of the cause he had to defend. He entered upon a few brief remarks, intended to palliate rather than to justify the motives of his client.

But he soon launched into considerations of the deepest political importance; and in order to contend with advantage against the head of a state, he associated the cause of liberty with the cause of an unfortunate exile, reduced to the necessity of seeking a subsistance from the profit of an obscure journal.

Sir James was well aware that the new chief of the French Republic had embraced liberty only for the purpose of destroying it. But while he plainly foresaw the future emperor in the consul, he could not venture openly to predict the dangers of Europe, without compromising the peace of which his country stood in need, in order to prepare for a new conflict. To express his ideas on this subject, he, therefore, introduced a sort of historical allegory, the hidden sense of which was sufficiently intelligible.

Adverting to the importance of the press in a free country, Sir James observed that the first gazettes which appeared in England were printed by order of Queen Elizabeth, who may thus be said to have made one of the most ingenious political experiments,—one of the most striking anticipations of the future which history records. He expressed his conviction of the intimate connection of the English national character with the press, and even with the periodical press; and in support of his opinion he quoted Bacon's encomium of Elizabeth.

It may, perhaps, be said that Sir James Mackintosh too highly exalted the liberal spirit of a queen, who cut off the hand of a journalist, for having

written against her. Charles II., a prince who is severely judged by English historians, shewed more tolerance than the daughter of the Tudors for offences of the press. Seeing a poor author, who was being conducted to the pillory, the king enquired what he had been guilty of, and was informed that he had been writing a pamphlet against the ministers. "What a fool!" replied the monarch; "why did he not write against me, and they would have let him alone!" I relate this well-known anecdote merely to shew the various ideas which have prevailed in England respecting the legislation of the press.

Shortly after the affair of Peltier, Sir James Mackintosh was appointed to an important judicial post in India; and there his eloquence was applied to another system of legislation. On his return to England, however, he did not again appear at the bar. He was elected a member of the house of commons, where he became distinguished for moderate opposition to the encroachments of power, and for vigorous logical elocution, which, though not brilliant, is always strictly conformable to parliamentary rules. He may be called the Royer-Collard of the English elective chamber. The other day I heard him support a motion for printing the old chronicles of Great Britain at the expence of government. Sir James is himself the author of a history, which is likely to form an era in the national literature of England. He is also a contributor to the Edinburgh Review; and his articles are distinguished for erudition and purity of style.

In the course of his travels, Sir James has acquired a vast store of varied information; and his brilliant conversation affords an admirable specimen of that universality of knowledge which, perhaps, an Englishman may attain more easily than the inhabitant of any other nation.

LETTER LIII.

TO M. AYLIES, ADVOCATE.

SINCE the death of Sir Samuel Romilly, Messrs. Brougham and Scarlett are the two most distinguished men at the English bar.

Sir Samuel Romilly, to whose memory the handsomest tribute of praise has been paid by one of the most eloquent members of our opposition, has left behind him no published speeches, except those which are to be found in the frequently incorrect reports of trials. Sir Samuel Romilly was descended from one of those French families, who emigrated to England at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes. France may justly regret the loss of so distinguished a man; and while we render homage to his talents and virtues, it is gratifying to reflect that some drops of French blood flowed in his veins. He entered upon his profession with no fortune; but with the laudable determination of acquiring one. His efforts were

soon crowned with success; and he had the satisfaction of seeing his family raised to independence. He was still young in years, and in talent, when he was introduced to the lady who afterwards became his wife; and with the noble confidence of a generous mind, he proposed that their union should be deferred until he could present to her the fruits which a few years of his professional exertions might produce. He soon after obtained wealth, fame, and happiness, three things which are so rarely united together. He lived in the enjoyment of his well deserved prosperity until the year 1820, when grief for the loss of his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, produced aberration of mind, and he put an end to his existence.

Sir Samuel Romilly soon became a member of the house of commons, where he was one of the most distinguished ornaments of the opposition. He particularly directed his attention to the penal code, in which he succeeded in making several useful amendments. In 1789 he visited France, and was introduced to Mirabeau, who requested him to draw up an abstract of the English parliamentary regulations.

In 1806, when Fox succeeded to the ministry, Sir Samuel Romilly was appointed attorney-general; but he resigned his functions when his party were superseded in the favour of the monarch by Lord Castlereagh.

No Englishman has greater claims on the gratitude of foreigners than Romilly. He was the constant opposer of the alien bill; and if he did

not succeed in getting it abolished, his powerful arguments at least forced the government to modify it in practice. It was natural that the descendant of a French refugee should solicit the intercession of the British parliament in favour of the protestants of the south of France in 1815; but however laudable might be the commisseration expressed by the English government for *our* unfortunate dissenters, it is impossible to avoid suspecting its sincerity, when one looks to the conduct of that same government with respect to Ireland.

I cannot always recognise the spirit of genuine philanthropy in the churlish liberalism which characterizes the political speeches of Mr. Brougham. This ungraceful orator possesses as much, or perhaps more, knowledge than Sir Samuel Romilly or Sir James Mackintosh, but he wants their taste and purity of style. His manner sometimes smacks of the tavern, even on the most solemn occasions. He is vehement and energetic; his irony is bitter, and his invective severe, even to excess. When he defends a bad cause, (and it would appear that he has a peculiar predilection for such,) the boldness of his manner before the judges borders on menace. This, it is true, may be merely the confidence of superiority, but in the sanctuary of the laws it has an air of insolence. When he interrogates a witness whose evidence embarrasses him, he often disdains the artful precautions of his profession. He fixes his eye on him with an appalling look of contempt;

there is gall in the very tone of his voice; and when he succeeds in confounding the object of his attack, his malignant smile injures the effect of his triumph. His speeches in the house of commons produce similar impressions. The effect of his most eloquent addresses is marred by bad taste and coarseness.

In conducting the defence of the Queen of England, Mr. Brougham had sufficient tact to modify his usual manner, and many passages of his speeches on that occasion are remarkable for dignity. The world is, unfortunately, but too familiar with the details of that trial, so disgraceful to Great Britain. The affair of the necklace was one of the thousand causes which helped to bring about the French revolution, by the suspicions to which it instantly subjected the most august persons in the state; and in the same way the opprobrium which the contents of the green bag reflected on majesty itself, might have directly compromised all the house of Hanover. A constitutional throne is, perhaps, established on basis more firm than any other; but the interest of sovereign authority, which always requires the aid of illusion and prejudice, imperatively demands that a Queen, like Cæsar's wife, should not be even suspected; or if she be, silence is the only resource. What a spectacle was that trial for the moral and religious people of three kingdoms!*

* There were certain inconsistencies in the conduct of the people of England with respect to Queen Caroline, which it is curious to remark.

The only lawyer who can compete with Mr. Brougham in reputation and talent, is Mr. Scarlett, who is also a member of the house of commons, and one of the opposition party; but he is less conspicuous in parliament than Mr. Brougham, because he is more occupied in his profession, and seems to have little taste for the brilliant discussion of political questions. It is said that Mr. Scarlett is fond of the quirks and subtleties of the law; because, full of confidence in his own shrewdness, he enjoys a satisfaction in rendering doubtful and obscure points as clear to others as they are to himself. He is simple and unaffected, and possesses a highly cultivated mind. There is something persuasive and pleasing in his tone of voice and delivery. His action is graceful; but from his dislike of all kinds of display, his language is not sufficiently varied, and his speeches want the aid of art. He is one of those laconic advocates, to

The Queen had the Court against her, and not only the radical opposition, but also the whig interest in her favour. The latter were somewhat ashamed of defending a woman, whose conduct they did not dare to justify; and no sooner did the ministers withdraw their bill of pains and penalties, than the Queen, though she gained her cause, lost her most influential friends. "We have," said they, "defended, in the person of the oppressed Queen, the constitution, which was attacked, but we are not the defenders of profligacy." The acclamations of the rabble, likewise, became less frequent, because they had no object in view. The English populace, which is easily excited, cannot comprehend the silent respect due to misfortune. The Queen, while she was the tool of opposition, had a court; but when triumphant, she was deserted, and became a source of embarrassment even to her lowest partizans. She died almost forsaken, and the alarm of an insurrection alone induced the good people of London to look out at their windows when her remains passed through the metropolis!

whom may be applied what Voltaire said of the English generally, that they gain an hour or two every day by the good use they make of their time in conversation. Mr. Scarlett prefers a short word to a long one, even when the long one, if it would not better interpret his idea, would at least add to the force and harmony of his style. He is not destitute of warmth and energy; but he rarely displays eloquence in the style of Burke, and he often begins a sentence better than he ends it.

Messrs. Brougham and Scarlett are employed chiefly at the northern assizes, and in the *nisi prius* courts, where it is the business of the counsel to detail the circumstances of the case, and to reply to the objections of his opponent. Mr. Scarlett is particularly clever in these replies. He is admirably dexterous in discovering the weak side of his assailant, and in making the most of the advantages which his own cause may present. It is most amusing to observe how he calls all his resources into requisition, and endeavours to surprise the counsel on the opposite side, if he should be for a moment off his guard. Sometimes he involves his hearers in a net-work of subtlety, and sometimes he seizes on any vague word, capable of bearing a meaning which suits his purpose, and makes it a weapon for assailing his antagonist. He evinces particular ingenuity in the cross-examination of witnesses. "You recollect having done so and so?" he says, and then, without being disconcerted by a positive denial, he will add, with

the tone and air of a man certain of the facts he is endeavouring to prove—"But try whether you cannot recollect it." The voice of Brougham inspires fear; but Scarlett fills the person whom he is addressing with a certain distrust of himself, and overpowers him by timid indecision. Scarlett may be said to be the most shrewd and subtle lawyer at the English bar, while Brougham is the most powerful speaker.

LETTER LIV.

TO M. PONCELET, PROFESSOR OF LAW.

If Ireland was formerly peopled by a colony from the east, it would be more difficult to prove that fact by the researches of antiquaries, than by the tradition of the truly Asiatic style which is preserved among Irish poets and Irish orators. There is, certainly, nothing Irish in the poetry or prose of Goldsmith and Swift. The eclogues of Collins, and the eloquence of Burke, take the lead in that school of brilliant declamation, which has produced the luxuriant imagery of Thomas Moore, and the emphatic diction of Curran, Grattan, and Phillips. In spite of the common traits of resemblance, which would warrant us in classing the above-men-

tioned speakers together, there are traits of difference in their characters and genius, which produce real contrasts between them. Burke, in whom eloquence seemed to be a habit rather than an effort—the natural language of an elevated mind, rather than a talent acquired by cultivation,—Burke, whose rich imagination descended to the most ordinary details of life, rarely overstepped the limits of good taste. His style is unequal, but for the most part sublime, and he is by turns profound, impassioned, and various, without ever deviating from strict purity of style. Grattan, who was an excellent man, and a powerful defender of his unfortunate country, was more diffuse and less philosophic; but his fine speeches are frequently disfigured by mannered affectation, an abuse of antithesis, and continual epigrams, to which the genius of Burke very rarely stooped. Curran, to whom I here intend more particularly to allude, because he owed half his celebrity to the bar, which Grattan soon deserted for politics, —Curran, I repeat, was a brilliant orator, full of fancy and originality, but he was too fond of effect, and was frequently ridiculous by the whimsical flights of his bold imagination. Phillips, who has all the faults of his predecessors in an encreased degree, is merely witty when he attempts to be ingenious, and is extravagant or unintelligible, when he aims at the sublime.

Sheridan was not exempt from the defects of Irish speakers. I shall have occasion to mention him when I allude to English parliamentary elo-

quence. At present I wish to direct your attention exclusively to the bar.

Curran was born at Newmarket, a little town in the county of Cork, where his father had a trifling situation. For his mother, who was a woman of intelligent mind, he cherished the fondest filial affection, and to her early lessons he attributed all the talent he evinced in mature life. "My father," he used to say, "bequeathed to me only his ill-favoured person; but, fortunately, my mother transmitted to me the treasures of her mind." He was fond of repeating her stories and clever sayings, and seemed to be exceedingly ambitious to resemble her. The following anecdote shews the taste for satirical humour, which he evinced even in his boyish years.

While Curran was very young, a puppet theatre was brought to Newmarket, and Punch soon caused the inhabitants to forget every other amusement of the town. Unfortunately, the manager of the show fell ill, and a bill was about to be posted up, announcing the suspension of the performances: but, at this critical juncture, Curran secretly presented himself to the master of the show, and offered to become the invisible organ of the drolleries of Punch. For several days, his performance was loudly applauded, and, encouraged by his success, he did not content himself with retailing common-place jokes. He made some allusions to political affairs, drew portraits of the principal beauties of the town, betrayed their love secrets, and satirized all his

auditors one after the other. But his indiscretion did not stop here. The grave curate of the parish became, in his turn, an object of ridicule. This was a signal for general disapprobation, and, with the almost unanimous voice of his auditors, Punch was driven from Newmarket. The modest author of all this scandal prudently preserved his *incognito*. Curran frequently related this anecdote of his boyish years as a proof of his precocious talent for extempore speaking. He used to say that he never afterwards produced so powerful an effect on any audience.

Mr. Boyce, the rector of a neighbouring parish, conceived a great liking for young Curran. After giving him the first elements of classical education, he sent him to Middleton college, and afterwards to the university of Dublin. Twenty-five years after, when Curran had risen to eminence at the bar, and was the occupant of an elegant mansion, he returned home one day in company with some friends, and found an old man seated comfortably in an arm chair by the drawing-room fire. The stranger turned round, and Curran recognizing him flew and embraced him. This was no other than his kind benefactor. "You are right," said he, "to make this house your own. Little John has not forgotten your goodness. But for you I should never have been saluted by the title of *honourable member* in the senate."

Curran was induced to devote himself to the legal profession in consequence of a misunderstanding, in which he became involved with his

masters at the university; for, by the advice of his mother, he at first intended to prepare himself for the church. A severe, though perhaps a merited punishment, to which he was subjected at college, taught him to feel the value of an independent profession, and he accordingly entered himself a student of the Middle Temple.

He was called to the bar in 1775, in his twenty-fifth year; and he began to practice in Dublin. He was not much noticed at the commencement of his career: and he did not begin to acquire his high reputation until after some years of perseverance and exertion. Unfortunately, his temper, which was naturally irascible, drew him into many dangerous misunderstandings with the objects of his personalities. He became involved in continual contests with the judges, and it is but fair to confess, that he was not in every instance in the wrong; for Ireland was then treated like a conquered country by the agents of power; and the acts of oppression which were daily committed, could not fail to rouse the indignation of a generous mind. Some of Curran's replies, however, seem very extraordinary, in spite of the provocation by which they were excited. On one occasion, when he had become somewhat too warm in the defence of his client, the judge directed one of the sheriffs to be in readiness to take any one into custody who should disturb the order of the court. Curran taking this as an indirect threat to himself, immediately turned to the sheriff, and told him that he might, if he pleased, go and prepare for him a

dungeon and a bed of straw, for that he should rest there more tranquilly than if he were seated on the judge's bench with an ill conscience. Curran's petulance led him to attack even those who were most inclined to be friendly with him. Lord Avonmore, who evinced a high regard for him, was in the habit of interrupting him in his digressions, and anticipating his conclusions; and Curran, in one of his most serious speeches, thought proper to jest at his lordship's expence, in a manner which did not reflect much credit on his taste. "My lord," said he, "if I evince any undue degree of warmth, it must be attributed to the powerful emotion which now agitates my mind. I have just witnessed a most horrible spectacle, and my feelings have not yet recovered from the shock. As I was just now passing through the market-place, I saw a butcher on the point of slaughtering a calf. He had raised his arm to strike the blow, when a child approached him unperceived, and, horrible to relate, the butcher plunged his knife ——" "Into the bosom of the child!" exclaimed the judge, with emotion. "No, my lord, into the heart of the calf; but your lordship is fond of anticipating."

The origin of his duel with Mr. St. Ledger is more honourable to him.

He had drawn a very unfavourable character of that individual, when pleading against his relation, Lord Doneraile. That nobleman, like all persons possessed of power in Ireland, looked upon the Irish catholics as slaves subject to their will

and caprice. Lord Doneraile kept a mistress, whose brother having been sentenced to some ecclesiastical punishment, begged that his lordship would intercede with the priest in his favour. Lord Doneraile made a personal application on the subject to the priest, who respectfully informed him that the bishop who pronounced the sentence alone had the power to commute it. His lordship, indignant at what he conceived to be a want of due consideration for his rank, grossly abused the old man, and struck him several blows. Such was the abject state of slavery to which Ireland was at that time reduced, that no advocate would venture to bring the case of the unfortunate man before a court of justice; and when Curran, who was then but little known, boldly stepped forward to attack the oppressor, his friends severely blamed his imprudence. His eloquence was inspired by honourable courage and just indignation, and he obtained, from a protestant jury, thirty pounds damages. This was not so bad, when it is recollected that forty years previously, a catholic having appealed against an unjust confiscation of his property, the Irish house of commons formally declared, that any barrister or attorney who might take up the cause of that catholic would be looked upon as an *enemy to the state.*

Lord Doneraile, mortified at his defeat, wrote to Curran, informing him that he would employ his influence in every possible way to oppose his advancement; but Curran, who had by this time fought the duel with his lordship's cousin, con-

tented himself with laughing at this malignant threat.

In the Irish parliament, Curran constantly pleaded the cause of his oppressed country, while he continued to defend at the bar every victim of tyranny. His political life, and the history of his pleadings at the bar, are equally connected with the revolutions which agitated his unhappy country up to the period of the union of the two parliaments.

In Ireland, a single witness is sufficient to procure conviction; and it is a disgraceful fact, that the English government used to maintain in that country a great number of spies, whose business it was to instigate crime. This odious system was frequently denounced by the eloquence of Curran. The government, which dreaded such an adversary, endeavoured to gain him over by the most brilliant offers; but he remained incorruptible. His courage was put to a severe test when he ventured to undertake the defence of the two brothers, Shears, who were convicted of high treason. An attempt was made to implicate the advocate in the offence charged against the criminals whom he was defending; and instead of the applause which his eloquence usually elicited, he was frequently interrupted by insolent clamour.

In 1800 the Irish parliament, by a kind of political suicide, declared its own abolition, in opposition to the wishes of the true friends of their country. Curran was profoundly afflicted at this event, which did not, however, put a stop to in-

surrectionary movements, by one of which, in 1803, Curran's family was compromised.

The leader of this commotion was a young man of high promise, named Robert Emmett, who was residing in Curran's family, and had conceived an attachment for Curran's daughter Sarah. There had been no circumstance in Emmett's conduct, which could have led to the suspicion of his being engaged in any plot. He had also for a long time hesitated to reveal his love for Miss Curran. But this attachment unfortunately doomed him to destruction, for he might have escaped from Ireland had he not delayed his departure, to bid a last adieu to his mistress. This circumstance would, of course, have furnished the government with a plausible pretext for assailing Curran, had his innocence been for a moment doubtful.

The administration of 1806 did not forget Curran. He was appointed master of the rolls in Ireland, which situation he held till 1814. He had for some time been afflicted with a profound melancholy, from which he in vain sought relief in travelling. He died in 1817, at the age of 68.

At his entrance into public life, Curran delivered his speeches extempore; but when he found he had a reputation to maintain, he for some time tried the plan of writing his speeches, and reciting them from memory. This, however, did not succeed, and he contented himself with studying his speeches whilst walking in his garden, or, what is still more curious, whilst playing on his violin.

He made only a very few notes to assist his memory, and these related to the metaphors which he intended to employ, and were of the briefest description. The notes he made for his defence of Mr. Rowan consisted only of these words :— "*Character of Mr. R.—furnace—rebellion—stifled —redeeming angel.*" With these simple memoranda, which, to him, were like the bundle of sticks used by the savage to whom Lord Erskine alluded, he entered on his discourse, and trusted wholly to the impulse of his natural eloquence. His son observes, that the result almost always surpassed his expectation. His imagination was warmed by the interest of the cause, and by the confidence with which the presence of an auditory usually inspires every orator, who is so fortunately constituted as to be capable of receiving this inspiration. A multitude of new ideas crowded upon him, to aid the vigour and eloquence of his address. By an inevitable consequence there escaped from him, in these moments of enthusiasm, some false or whimsical ideas, which, though they may be adduced as instances of his bad taste, nevertheless bear evidence of his prolific imagination.

The secret of Curran's success and style is, perhaps, still better explained in a frank apology for his defects, which his son makes in his amusing biography.

The juries whom he had to address, and for whom he formed his style, were not fastidious critics, but, for the most part, men of rather coarse than delicate minds, and ready to allow

themselves to be persuaded by him who knew best how to amuse or dazzle them. However pure might be the natural inspirations of his taste, he soon perceived that his imagination had full scope; and when once the charm began to operate, his most fantastic conceptions and images were as well received as the most refined creations of fancy. That attention which the judges would not, perhaps, have granted to a cool reasoner, a methodical and grave orator, they had not power to withhold from one who solicited it with gay and persuasive familiarity. This violation of rule became a privilege, of which Curran never ceased to avail himself; therefore in all his speeches, however solemn the occasion, he continually fell into his old habit of negligence.

But if as an orator Curran may not be wholly faultless, yet as an honest man, and a steady patriot, his glory is pure and unblemished.

LETTER LV.

TO M. CH. DE REMUSAT.

Mr. Charles Phillips is possessed of talent and even genius, but, unfortunately, by a misdirection of that talent and genius, he has exaggerated the defects of his predecessors and contemporaries at

the Irish bar. His speeches have been the subject of severe critical animadversion, to which Mr. Phillips has replied with singular warmth. He regards hyperbole as the essence of Irish oratory; and to prove that his is the genuine style of national eloquence, he has published a selection of what he terms the *beauties* of Burke, Curran, &c. some of which are, certainly, calculated to compromise the reputation of those distinguished speakers. In his preface to this publication, Mr. Phillips observes, that the Irish orator is more intent on persuasion than conviction. Metaphors, he says, are the first language of a nation's infancy, and, like all that is connected with childhood, they continue to please in advanced life. Mr. Phillips is of opinion that the great mistake of the critics is to have judged by the same rules the address intended to be read, and the discourse intended to be spoken. What may appear extravagant in the one is chaste in the other; and the allusion calculated to rouse the enthusiasm of an assembly, may appear absurd and rhapsodic in the solitude of the closet.

There is, undoubtedly, some truth in Mr. Phillips's theory. The orator, like the dramatic poet, should seek to produce an effect on his auditors, rather than to satisfy the fastidiousness of criticism. Phillips seems to have set himself up as the Don Quixote of figurative style. He defends, not only his own taste, but also that of his countrymen, who are, for the most part, more easily dazzled by flowery language, than convinced by rational ar-

guments. But though the Irish are, generally speaking, more gifted with imagination than judgment, they, nevertheless, justly appreciate the talents of Sheridan and Burke, and Mr. Phillips would have shewn himself more wise in imitating those models, than in composing speeches like Mr. Maturin's romances.

Yet it would be unjust not to admit that Phillips's speeches occasionally contain passages of striking beauty. The speech he delivered as counsel for the plaintiff, in the cause of Guthrie *versus* Sterne, presents a charming picture of domestic happiness, ably contrasted with the disgrace of an adulterous wife, and the misery of an injured husband. The peroration of this address could not fail of producing a deep impression on the minds of the jury. Here vehemence is not exaggeration. The advocate calls for damages from the seducer; but he artfully passes over the wrong sustained by the husband, and dwells on the unhappy fate of the children, who are doomed to bear all the disgrace of their mother's infamy.

These scandalous *crim. con.* trials, in which the husband claims the price of his wife's dishonour, afforded Lord Erskine the opportunity of delivering two speeches, which may be regarded as master-pieces of their kind. In these causes too, the merit of Mr. Phillips's eloquence shines most conspicuously; because they afford no opportunity for introducing those extravagant political images, for which he manifests so decided a predilection.

Messrs. Burrows and Bushe, two other members of the Irish bar, form part of the constellation, of which Mr. C. Phillips is the principal star. They are more free of the defects of the Irish school of eloquence than Mr. Phillips, while, at the same time, they display fewer of those happy traits which are occasionally observable in the oratory of the latter. There are also several other men of eminent ability at the Irish bar. Mr. Plunkett, Sergeant Lefroy, and Mr. O'Connell are each distinguished for a peculiar originality of style, which is attributable to their respective situations, their political or religious opinions, and their individual characters.

END OF VOL. I.

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